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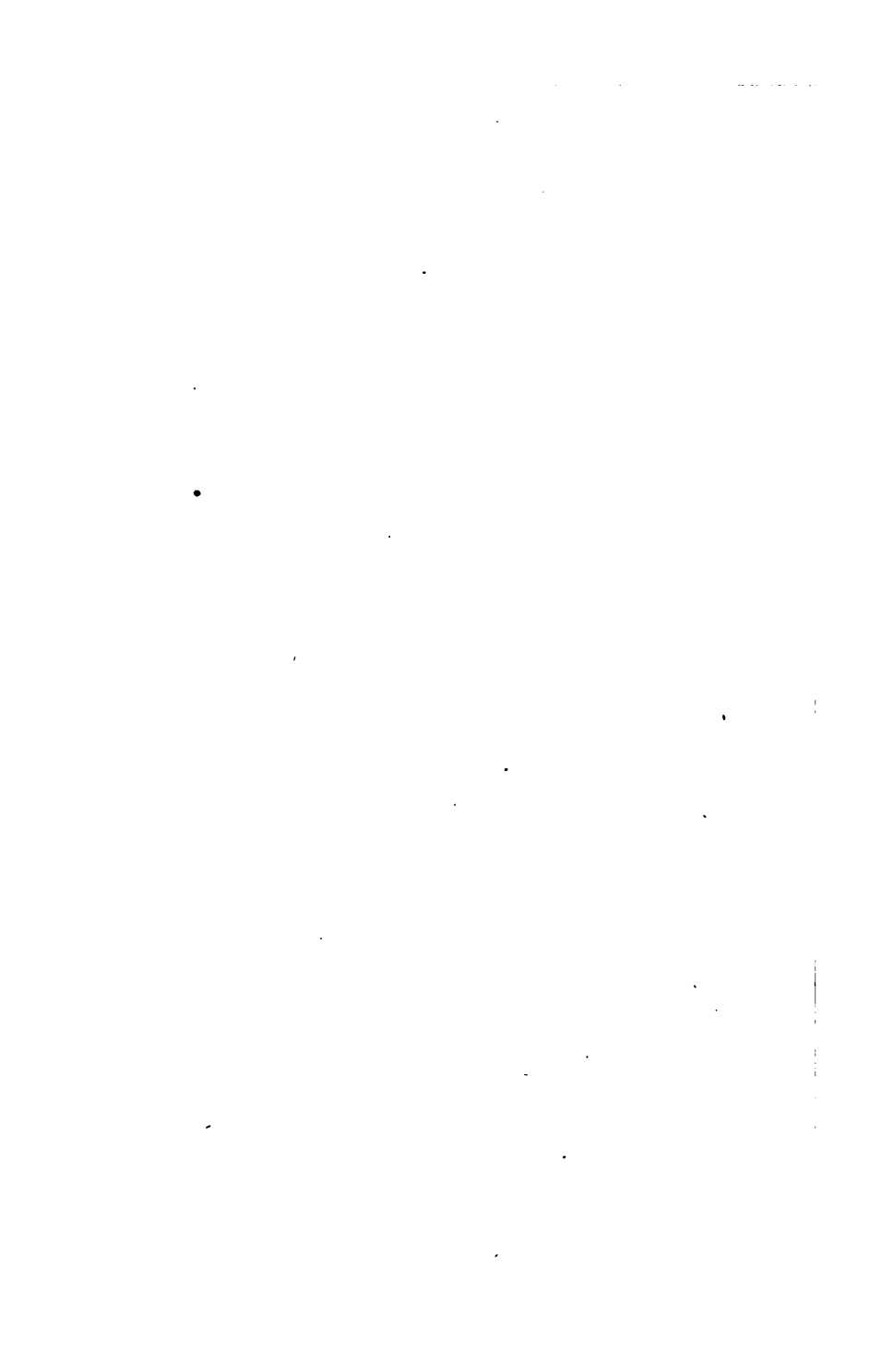
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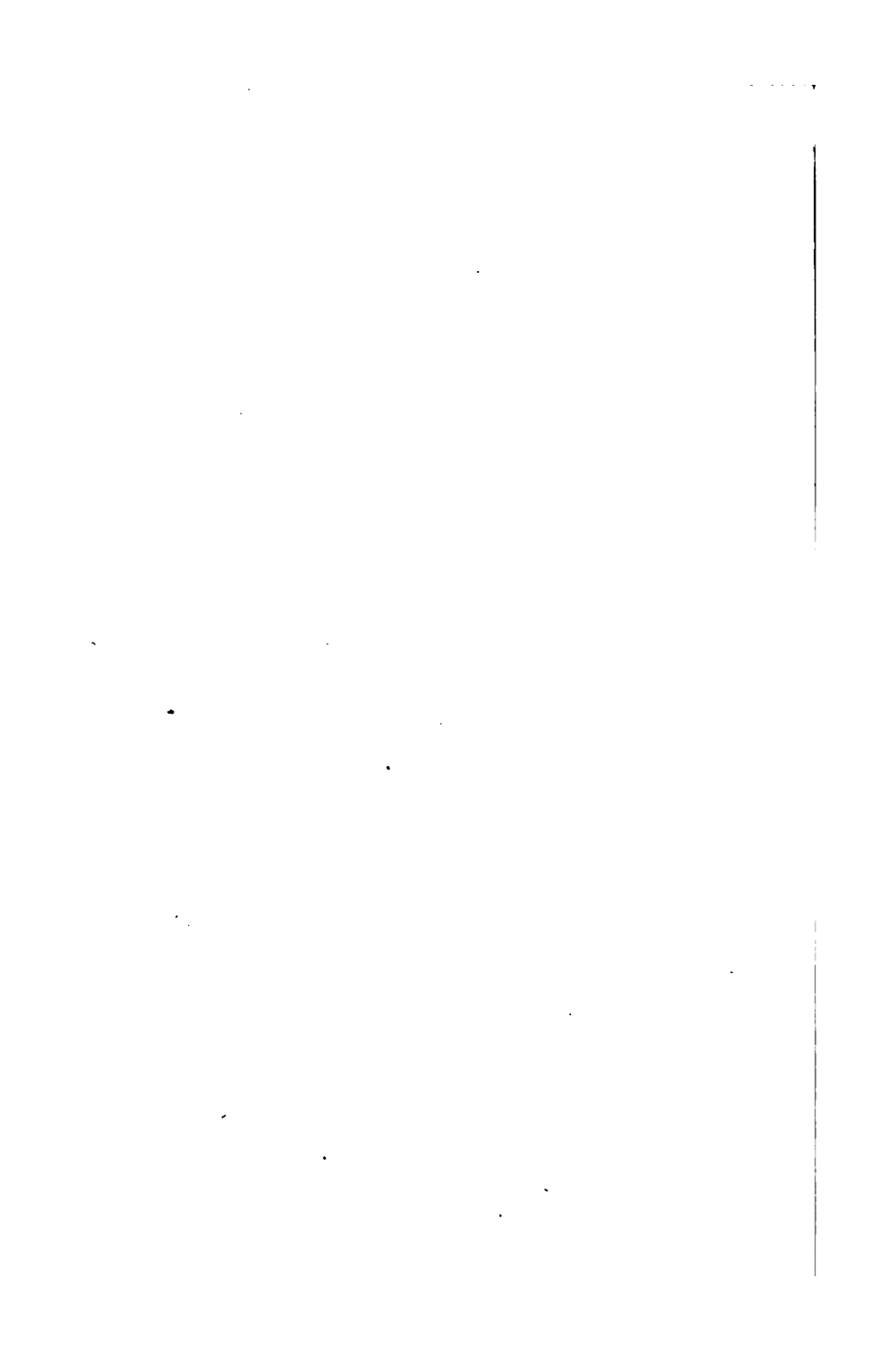




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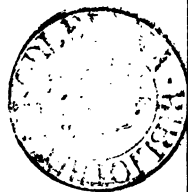


BASIL,
THE SCHOOLBOY;

OR,

THE HEIR OF ARUNDEL.

Edward Morro.



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PREFACE.

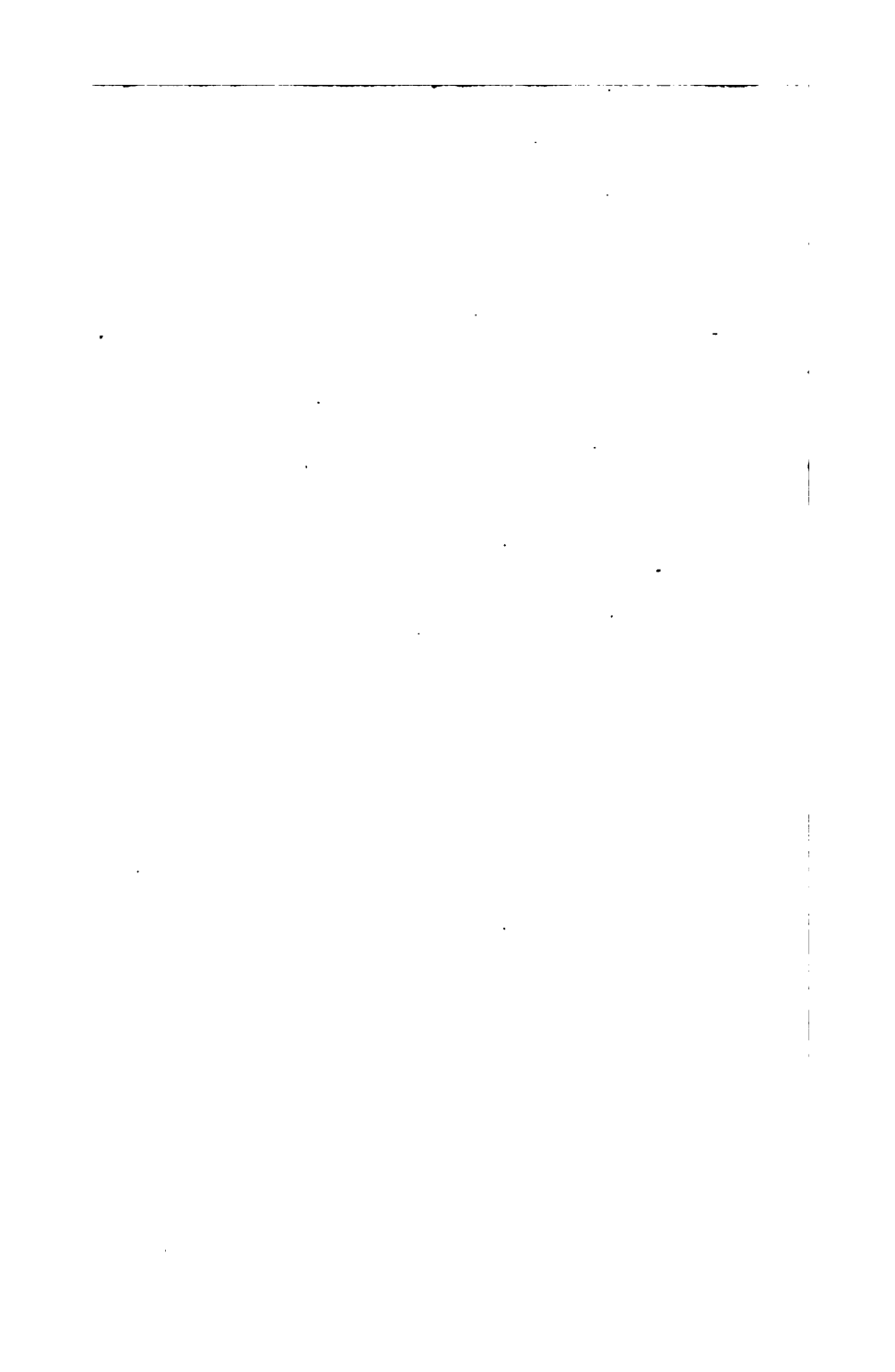
THERE are two very common mistakes, among others, which we find made in our public and private schools. The inclination to encourage boys in estimating fifth-rate virtues above first-rate ones, or sometimes even vices and infirmities above virtues at all; as if a schoolboy were not as much bound to recognise and obey the dictates of his higher and holier nature, his feelings of affection, compassion, and reverence, as the man is. And secondly, the tendency some people have to expect, or encourage the expectation of advanced religious states and expressions as the normal condition of the good youth, instead of looking on these as the rare exceptions to be accepted with hesitation when offering themselves to our notice; while a high tone of consistent morality and the diligent performance of simple religious duty, is to be considered as the staple and healthy state of the religious schoolboy.

It is partly to illustrate the above remarks that the following tale of schoolboy life has been written.



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THE HEIR OF ARUNDEL:

A STORY OF SCHOOL LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

BASIL AND HIS MOTHER.

THE scene of the opening of my tale was a retired village in Shropshire, a mixture of those quiet lanes and tall hedgerows so peculiar to English loveliness, and especially to that district which borders on North Wales. Far from the din of the world, the people of the village still lived in that simplicity which now marks so few places around us. At the time of my tale, the clergyman of the place was one who, after the quiet labours of many years, had become known and loved by all his people. Far up a lane a house had stood empty a long time; some mysterious connexions with it had given rise to many reports, until at length fame said that it had been taken, and would presently be occupied. Of course great curiosity arose as to who the inhabitants were to be, and who had the daring to live there, as common rumour declared that it was haunted. On a day soon after, however, as the clergyman was going out on his usual work, he saw by the blinds drawn up, and other signs, that the new inhabitants had arrived. Sunday came, and every one expected to seem them in church. The church was fuller than usual; at each opening of the door all eyes were turned in that direction to see

the unknown inhabitant or inhabitants ; but the service passed, and no one came. Evening service was full too, for the first sight of the mysterious stranger. The inhabitants of the village were mostly poor agriculturists ; a few farmers and the inhabitants of this house formed the whole of the upper society of the place. It was not very remarkable, then, that there should be such a sensation. The second Sunday passed away, and there were fewer people ; the third came, and they were reduced to their usual number : when expectation having ceased, in the beginning of the service on the fourth Sunday two figures entered ; but they baffled all calculation. A lady, whose tall and slender figure was concealed by the drapery of her dress, and whose face was hidden by her veil, led by the hand a boy of about fourteen. The youth was below the usual size, and wore so saddened an expression on his pale face as to attract no little interest in the casual observer. A large dark eye, whose light seemed to indicate the feelings of no ordinary soul, was one which spoke of a child of no common character, and perhaps of no common history. The clergyman called next day at the hitherto deserted abode, to fulfil alike the claim of curiosity and courtesy. The visit did not tend to throw much light on the mystery. She had come, the lady said, to spend a few months in seclusion and quietness—repose was her object. A few words were rather dropped than uttered about ill health and difficult circumstances, and with these an interview, already embarrassed enough, seemed likely to conclude. The room was dark and cheerless, the furniture of the most poor description which a retired lodging-house could afford, and the symptoms of any thing like life or energy in the occupation of its inmates were very small. The lady's manner was dignified and calm, yet even this could not conceal embarrassment ; and though the small window and darkness of the day gave but scanty admission to the light, there was enough to show that her pallid countenance confirmed the suspicion her frail figure had excited, that she was one whose days were numbered. The boy was drawing, and scarcely did more than rise on the entrance of Mr. Morton, resuming his occupation al-

most immediately, with a seeming unconcern, which was an indication of the fact that neither he nor his mother—if such the lady was—were of ordinary kind. There was so much embarrassment in the visit, that the clergyman went away with his curiosity kindled, rather than having gained any light on the mysterious circumstances.

There was just that touch of wildness in the lady's manner which wove round the whole circumstances the air of romance; while the calm and collected manner of the youth, who seemed so unconsciously pursuing his occupation, gave a reality to the whole which forbade any trivial interpretation of their position or history. The many reports which had been spread concerning the house, the dimness of the furniture, the sombre sadness of the twilight hour, all added to the peculiarity of the scene. Mr. Morton returned home musing on the circumstances, not perhaps without that dash of curiosity and love of gossip, from which in so retired a village not even the clergyman will be free. Suspicion ever rests on strange comers who have no reason to give for their appearance, and no introduction; and yet there was that in the manner of these strangers which lulled suspicion, and enlisted every feeling in their favour.

After the first few days the rumour and curiosity had died away, and the villagers thought nothing more about them than before their arrival. It was on an evening soon after this that the lady was seen to go out with her boy, on one of her accustomed walks across a village path at the back of the churchyard seldom frequented: they took the way towards an antiquated mansion which had stood unoccupied for years, and was an object rather of alarm than aught else to the evening wanderers of the village. The sun had just set, and the old trees of the avenue threw their dark foliage in sombre grandeur against the yellow glow of the sky, like a procession of spirits of a long-past day come out to gaze on the scene of their earthly sojourn. The lady and her boy sat down on a bank beneath their shadow; the stars were beginning to peer through the curtain of the sky. They sat some time silent, and the boy was the first to speak, as he took his mother's hand in his.

"I cannot understand, mother, I wish you'd tell me, why you are so sad—other boys' mothers are not so sorrowful. What is it makes you so sorrowful?"

"Nothing, my child!" was her quick answer.

"There is something more than usually sad in your manner, and I often see tears in your eyes, and hear you sigh, as you did this morning when you read that letter; you must tell me why there is so much mystery in my history," said he with earnest firmness, as if he meant to be answered.

"No, Basil, not this evening; you may know more some day, but not yet."

"Oh, yes," said Basil, "you must tell me, I am so unhappy. All other boys where we have lived seem happy and careless; and there is some mystery hanging over me which was always doubtful: indeed, I cannot be happy till I have found it out."

They sat a few minutes in silence, and the old church-bell told out the parting hour of light, the bat wheeled in circling eddies round, darting through the shady vistas of the ancestral trees. She sat musing awhile in anxious thoughts, when she turned to her boy: "Basil, do you love me?"

"Love you! my own, my kind, kind mother; don't say that," said he, throwing his arms around her neck and bursting into tears. "Oh! I am so unhappy; I know I've hurt you by what I asked."

There was again a pause—a painful silence, which again Basil broke: "Mother, one question I want to put especially; where is my father? I never saw him, and yet I have never heard that he died."

"You may see him some day," said she with a painful embarrassment of manner.

"But why is there any thing which prevents my seeing him now, if he still lives?"

"Who, my child," said his mother quietly, "has been speaking to you?"

"No one," said Basil, hesitating; and then repeated more firmly, "no one, I assure you. I have beautiful dreams in the night, mother; I fancy that I stand on a flight of steps of old grey stones covered with roses and

briars. I fancy that I am dressed in velvet, and a lady like you holds my hand, and on the other side there is a tall man, and he looks so handsome, but yet so stern; and I walk so proudly between them, mother, and they call me their own Basil, their darling child: and there are antlered deer on the lawn, and horses fitted for princes to ride on, and they all seem to wait for the tall man's bidding; and there are servants who bend the head, and noble dogs that crouch their silken forms beneath the tall man's hand; and then there is a long, long gallery, mother, with pictures on the wall, and I walk along it between the two figures, and there is one at the end that has a curtain over it, and I never see behind it, though I long to look; for when I touch the curtain I wake, mother. Do tell me what the dream means; I am sure that *you* know. The lady in the dream looks like you, and the house, I think, was my home long, long ago, but I can't remember when." Basil paused and looked on the ground, as if he had said rather too much; his mother was silent and embarrassed.

"Hush, Basil, child," said his mother, grasping him, and pressing him to her bosom; "do not talk about your dreams."

"Mother," said Basil, "the dream is like something I remember; I wish you would tell me the meaning of all these strange recollections and dreams."

"Not now, not now, my child; it is late, and we must be gone," said she hurriedly.

Basil was now at that age when the mind begins to think of things for itself, and such recollections naturally occupied his attention.

As they drew near home, intent on their own thoughts, two men came towards them; there was nothing peculiar in their appearance, but their step was hurried, and something which Basil could not explain gave him an anxious feeling as he passed them. Nor would he have noticed that, unless circumstances in after days had recalled the event to his mind: his mother, he remembered, started on passing them, and her hand he held in his was very cold.

Basil lay down to sleep that night with his head full

of wild thoughts and anxious suspicions, which brooded like a cloud over his soul. He loved his mother with the deepest affection ; but there was an air of mystery about her manner, and always had been, which was perplexing to his young mind ; and now that he grew older, strange recollections of scenes in days gone by came out in his memory like the bright-coloured spots on a dim picture sprinkled with water drops. He could remember scenes very, very long ago ; but then there came a long chasm when he could remember nothing, which painfully broke the intervals of his existence. He had, over and over again, tried, but tried in vain, to recall this period, but it would not come out ; it was like the sealed page of a book which breaks the story, and you try to open it, and cannot, in your dreams. He never felt all this press upon him so much as to-night ; though it always gave him a mysterious air, which had much increased of late days. He lay upon his bed watching the faint light of the summer's night through the casement window, and listening to the murmuring sound of the roses that played on the pane, as he tossed himself about on his pillow and could get no rest. At length he fell into a half-sleep, from which he was suddenly startled ; a hand gently opened the door of his room. Some strange impulse made him resolve to pretend sleep. The curtain gently drew aside, and he felt some one approaching his forehead, and breathe the kiss they seemed afraid to give ; a sweet, sad whisper uttered the words, " May God in Heaven bless my child ! " and the figure was gone. He knew it was his mother, but did not dare to move, or even open his eyes ; he felt like one spell-bound, until at last starting suddenly from his bed a wild boding seized his mind that his mother was gone not to return. He rushed into the passage ; he went to his mother's door, which stood partly open ; he gently touched it, unwilling to be assured of what he felt was true, that she was not there. At last, with a trembling hand he drew aside the curtain ; the pillow had not been pressed, nor the sheet disturbed ; his mother was gone ; the candle that flared on the table from the draught in the passage only shone on the room to show it was empty, and desolate of

what had been its life. He rushed down stairs, and the rooms were empty, silent, and deserted; the door stood partly open into the road.

I draw a veil over the anguish of the child during the succeeding hours of the morning; he had for a long time had forebodings which he could not explain with regard to his mother's conduct; she was sometimes wild and sometimes sad, which gave him an impression almost of insanity. The alarm was quickly spread, and suspicions aroused through the village. She was sought for far and wide, high and low. A portion of a white dress was found floating on the river; tales spread of a figure in white having been seen in the early grey light fleeting over the dewy fields, and attracting the observation of the carter, who lazily walked at his horses' heads; the fact of her having gone out without any thing on except her usual in-door dress,—all tended to confirm the impression in the village that suicide, impelled by insanity, had been her end. At length, ere a day or two had passed away, and the search proved utterly vain, the doubt became a certainty, and Basil was looked upon in the village as a forlorn and desolate orphan.

As no one offered to protect or to recognise him, the clergyman received him into his house, with more than half intention, if no one came forward, to make him an inmate of his own family. Basil was a boy whose winning manners, in spite of great reserve, made for him many friends. The poor child received the kindness of the clergyman with the utmost gratitude; his position was a mystery to himself; he knew of no one who strictly belonged to him except those over whose fate there seemed to hang some wild and awful doubt. For years past he had no companion but his mother; it was but in the memories of his life that any other beings loomed on his horizon, as those do whom we only saw and knew in the early, unformed hours of the past. In a few days Basil became more than satisfied with his new home; though he was very silent and very sad, and usually cried himself to sleep. He spent much of his day in wandering among those haunts of the neighbourhood where he had been with his mother, and where he still

had a half hope he should find her yet. The clergyman was very delicate in the kindness that he showed him, and never pressed an inquiry beyond the point in which he saw it pleased Basil to inform him.

Owing to this the boy's discomfort in his new position became gradually softened; he had become almost to regard himself as a regular inmate of Mr. Morton's family, when one morning early a horseman rode up to the quiet parsonage before breakfast, and a young soldier, whose gay and careless manner betokened the man of the world, throwing the reins of his horse into the hands of the gardener, asked to see Mr. Morton immediately. He was shown into the good man's study, who was waiting with his windows open to enjoy the balmy breath of the morning, and staying for Basil to arrive with his early morning-lesson. He bowed as the young officer entered, who, introducing himself as Colonel Mortimer, briefly stated that he was a relative of Basil's mother, and had come forward with the desire of relieving Mr. Morton of the expense and responsibility he had so kindly taken on himself, adding, at the same time, that he wished to see Basil directly, with the view of telling him he was to leave the roof of his new friends and go to school.

The news came like a thunder-stroke on the host and his guest. Mr. Morton pleaded his earnest wish to keep the boy, and Basil implored with tears to stay in his new home; but it was in vain. The new relative was resolute, and Basil must go. We pass over the parting: in three hours he had driven away in a hired carriage with his relation.

The school to which Basil was to go was one of those old-fashioned red-brick edifices which, looming in dull solemnity at the end of an avenue of elm-trees, marked that period of English history whose leading idea, perhaps, would best embody all that was depressing to the buoyancy of the youthful mind—that of the two first Georges. As poor Basil drove up the avenue with his new-found relation, after a really painful farewell to Mr. Morton, the cumbrous boughs of the trees, the unused road half-green with grass and moss, the sombre silence

that hung over the front of the antiquated mansion, only broken by the occasional cry of depressed school-boys playing in the distance, had already thrown that weight over his mind, which the formal reception in the empty hall by two well-dressed middle-aged maid-servants, and a staring foot-boy peeping over their shoulders, did not tend to dispel. He and his cousin were shown into a large drawing-room, the furniture of which stood round the walls, staring at each other across the room, with that antique formality that made you feel as if each chair was afraid of the sublime attitude assumed by its neighbour. The arrangement of the books and other articles on the table implied that they were never touched except by the cold clammy fingers of terrified boys who were brought by weeping mothers to be consigned to the necessary term of school-life. The schoolmaster at length came in.

"A young prop," said he, "eh! sir?" looking significantly at Basil's cousin.

"Yes, Doctor, yes," was the answer; "a young one whom we have just cut away from the apron-strings of his mother."

Basil winced from the cold, unfeeling manner in which both his cousin and future preceptor treated his condition; but there was no help for it, and he must bear it as patiently as he could. The schoolmaster came up to him, and, with a pat on his head, said,

"I have no doubt we shall be very good friends."

"He will be very happy, Doctor," continued his cousin, "under your excellent roof. Remember, Basil," said his cousin as he went out, "you are bound to prepare yourself quickly in your education here, that you may go out as a soldier by and by. You have no friends to protect you but myself, and I may be able to get you a commission."

Basil's heart sunk within him. "I am determined not to be a soldier," said he, "if I am not any thing."

The officer soon withdrew. His departure seemed like that of the last gleam of sunshine. As soon as he was gone, Basil seemed to realise to himself the idea that he was utterly alone. The master proposed to send for the

elder boys to introduce a new schoolfellow, and formally made him acquainted with each member of the school.

"Pray take this young gentleman under your protection, Dance," said the master. The boy addressed approached Basil with that kind of smothered feeling which implied he meant to be, if he could, his chief tyrant.

Oh, why do so many schoolmasters, and some of them men of kind hearts, forget the keen anguish of the first lone hour of school, and hope to smother the flame which the hand of the holiest nature is fanning! Why dam up instead of channel the waters which flow from so pure a fountain as the love of home!

CHAPTER II.

TALBOT.

ALL was new to Basil: the many faces, the numberless questions, the rude eyes which examined him. He shrank from his new companions. He was naturally nervous and sensitive, and had been brought up by his mother with that kind of anxious care which had tended to foster a spirit little suited to roughing it in school. The mystery, too, which hung around his history, the frequent strangeness of his mother's conduct, tended to create a slightly conscious romance about him, which schoolboys never appreciate, seldom understand.

"What's your name, sir?" said a short fat boy, with dark piercing eyes sunk deep into a moonlike face, while a satirical curve in his lips spoke the determination to bully, and his hands thrust into his pockets added to the apparent firmness of his purpose. He seemed the hero and leader of a large party, for he had burst into the school-room the very moment the master had conducted poor Basil to be introduced to his new companions, and

had left him to enjoy the privilege of the introduction. "What's your name, sir?"

"Basil," was the timid reply from the new boy.

A roar of laughter of course ensued, for nothing is more despicable in the eyes of a high-minded school-boy, than the recognition of a Christian name. A self-supporting kick, rapidly administered on both sides, announced to the astonished Basil the effeminacy of having a Christian name. His other name was not so easy to tell.

"My mamma always called me Langford, Basil Langford; but I believe —"

This was too much; and another roar of laughter, and a crowd of peering faces pushed forward towards the unhappy boy, eager to examine "the fellow who didn't know his own name," was the immediate effect. It was quite clear that they had started a good game, and the new boy was no trifle for fun. His trembling, alarmed appearance mixed with the romantic tinge of his character made a strange contradiction in him, which was apparent even on this occasion. There was a mixture of indignant expression and timid manner which only marked him out more than ever for the object of ridicule and attack. The usual series of opening questions accordingly went on with renewed vigour.

"Where have you been to school?"

"Nowhere; I lived at home."

"Where does your mother live?"

A deep crimson mantled to his brow, followed by a cold paleness, as he faltered and said, "I don't know."

A loud burst of laughter followed this. "Don't know his own name or where his mother lives! why he's bewitched, possessed; he's a prodigy turned into a boy's shape by some spirit."

Dance—the youth we spoke of just now, he of the eyes and pockets—excited by the effect of his questions, and flushed with the opportunity it gave him of being a leader of mischief, pushed on a step, and laying hold of Basil's arm, shook him violently. "Now, young sir," said he, "if you're telling lies, you shall suffer for it. This is not the place for lies; no, sir, we won't be humbugged; so just have it out and tell us something straight-

forward, or we'll take you out to the pond and see what cold water can do to recover your wits."

The violent manner, the Satanic laugh, the twinkling cruel eye of his persecutor, the number of faces which peered upon him from every side, the evident desire for sport at his expense, brought a hundred thoughts to Basil's frightened mind: his home, his mother, his happy hours with her, the tales she had told him, and the songs she had sung, they all came back full of sad loveliness in this his first strife with life. The tear sprang to his eye, and he looked round for escape.

"No, young sir, there's no escape. Lock that door, Stanfield," shouted Dance, "or that fool Talbot will be coming with some of his Quixotic foolery."

"I wish he would come," muttered a little boy, who had been fixing his large eyes on Basil all the time with a close frown, which meant something between helpless indignation and the effort to keep back a tear, while with his hand he kept buttoning and unbuttoning his pocket, every now and then looking as if he were about to leap over the crowd, and stand by as Basil's champion. "I wish Talbot would come," said he, somewhat louder than he meant or thought.

"What's that you say?" roared Dance, as he seized the luckless boy by his fair hair, and twisted his fingers in it till the tears in good earnest sprang to his eyes. "Say that again, sir."

Willie did say it again, and the next moment he lay reeling and gasping for breath some yards beyond the circle.

"Discipline is needful for the young," said Dance, with a wink of his eye, as he looked round for the applause of the surrounding group. "And now, sir," said he, turning to Basil, "seeing you have seen what is the consequence of disobedience, your memory has probably recovered its powers."

"Who is Talbot?" Basil was thinking, "I wonder who."

The evident excitement produced by the mention of Talbot's name, the nervous alarm betrayed by some who kept looking at the door, as if expecting an entrance of

some one, and the indignation of Dance himself at the threat of Talbot's interference, all had struck Basil; and, in the midst of his alarm, a gleam of hope glanced over his heart. But matters were becoming critical.

"Now, sir," said his tormentor, "it seems clear that you cannot recover possession of the precious gift of memory, consequently we must proceed to further points, and deal with you presently for this obstinacy. There is a rule here, that every one who enters this school must prove that he is not tied to his mother's apron-strings by doing two things: one is, to swear a good round oath, and the other is, to stop saying his prayers; as the refusal to do this has always been looked upon in this assembly as a sign of effeminacy, and therefore every member of the school has gone through this ordeal."

All there was of fire in Basil flashed through his soul; his brow shone with crimson, and his singularly large eye lit up with an indignation which made his face beautiful. "I never did swear, and I never will."

For a moment his firm manner daunted his persecutors, and Dance was silent; but the silence was followed by a burst of laughter. "Oh, you won't, eh? Then we'll toss you in a blanket till you do; and you've heard what that is."

This brutal threat related to a species of torture often used at schools, and which had more than once in this school been followed by all-but fatal consequences.

"Nothing; nothing shall make me," said Basil, very firmly; and the door opened.

"Talbot!" was the murmur all round. All eyes were fixed on the door, through which two youths came. The foremost was evidently Talbot. Tall, manly, fair, with an eye of the palest blue, a keen brow, and an expression bordering on pride, his hair fair and curling, white trousers and a blue jacket, Talbot seemed the ideal of what a youth of seventeen ought to be. His presence was electrical.

Willie, of whom we spoke, seemed inclined to spring forward with delight, but recoiled as if at a thought of the hazard he ran by so open a manifestation. Basil, whose courage had already been considerably strength-

ened, felt it doubly inspired by the appearance and eye of the expected hero. His attitude became more determined than before; and the high flush which had mounted to his cheek, and the flash of his eye, added to the not common appearance of the new boy in the mind of Talbot, who had just entered. He spoke with that peculiar tone of command and authority which perhaps is only possessed in the whole world by the head boys of a school—a despotism so calmly serene as is realized by no other ideal power in the world.

“What’s the matter here?” cried Talbot. “Dance, what’s the row?”

“He’s making—Dance is making—he’s a—a—it’s, you know what,” cried the little hero of the pockets, speaking with the broken agony of earnestness, pushing forward through the group, but his speech breaking down without coming to an end; for other voices rose higher, and he did not seem to be one on whom the proud eye of Talbot rested with peculiar attention.

Dance looked profoundly silly. He drew back a few paces with an awkward expression of face, and a manner cringing towards Talbot, implying a weakness which did little to raise him in the estimation of his little army.

“What’s all this?”

“Only a new boy,” said Dance. “He won’t be initiated.”

“Won’t be initiated!” said Talbot, with a tone that meant he must be.

Basil lost heart. Willie receded two steps, like the lady in the little weather-house, who walks backward when it is wet, and the little gentleman immediately walks out to see after her; for as Basil’s faction drew back, Dance advanced. Talbot’s face was clearly the weather; but the weather was to be fair. Basil turned the tide. He stepped forward with a firm manner and interposed between Dance and Talbot, saying calmly, “I wouldn’t swear—that’s what it was; and I won’t.” The speech was unadorned and simple; but it had its weight. Talbot had clearly decided.

“What do you mean, sir?” said he to Dance. “Swearing is a vile and vulgar thing, and I won’t have it here.”

Talbot felt it was a wicked thing, but he had not courage to assert his statement on the highest principle. There is a false shame with youth at boldly asserting high principles; and this is too much encouraged by those who are for ever talking of the beauty of youthful reserve. There may be much beauty in it; but when it consists in concealing a really high principle, and asserting a lower one in its place, it becomes merely cowardice.

Dance muttered something.

"Do you hear, sir?" said Talbot, with determination, for he despised and hated Dance; "do you hear, sir? I won't have it; I hate swearing; and if the new fellow is too much of a gentleman to swear, he shan't swear."

Dance murmured louder still something about its being "all humbug," and "always have done it," and "who's Talbot?"

The last little question, though put in a very low voice, was loud enough for Talbot to hear. The colour mounted to his cheek.

"You will, sir, eh? will you?" and the next moment a heavy blow, of a very flattening nature, in the centre of Dance's face, settled at once the whole question as to who the successful general was in that school; for not a murmur was raised for Dance, and there were no doubtful signs of sympathy with Talbot. It was clear Basil had fought a battle and won a victory; and that was a battle on a clear ground of boldly-asserted principle, put forward on its true basis. Here he stood higher than his champion. Basil felt strong. He felt a slight pull at his jacket behind, and turned round. Willie was there, his face lit up with a beaming smile, and eyes half full of tears, which seemed all shed for Basil's sake; or was it for truth's sake? There was that mixture in the poor little fellow's manner between delight at Basil's success, and the desire to remind his newly-adopted friend that he had spoken up for him when no one else did, and that now he was on the winning side, and did not mean to lose his chance, which made Basil smile.

"New boy, come here!" said Talbot; and Basil, full of expectation and hope, the envy of all the group, passed out of the room after the monarch. As he was passing

through the door, another more vigorous pull of his jacket told him that he was leaving behind him one whose championship of Basil's cause by no means made it safe for him to be left alone in the room. Poor Willie's pale and anxious face, his trembling manner,—for he was a slender little fellow, and weakly too, though he had a spirit high enough for truth's sake,—made Basil pause.

"Let me go too, please," said the little fellow, earnestly looking up to Basil's face with a pleading look which went to Basil's heart. "Do, please, do!" continued he, as Talbot urged Basil to be quick.

"No, no," said Talbot, haughtily. "Go along, sir, and mind your own place," as he pushed Willie back into the arms of Dance, who had advanced, burning to wreak his vengeance on some one for his faded laurels and fallen crest.

"Oh, do let me come!" was the bitter cry which rung in Basil's ear, as the door closed and he followed Talbot, and left his little champion to the tender mercies of the school.

Basil's heart smote him; he half hesitated; should he not go back? should he not defend his kind and generous little friend?

Talbot slipped his arm through Basil's. "That's a young fool—not worth a thought," said he; "he's always whining."

The word of advocacy had mounted to Basil's tongue, but it lay frozen there; he was spell-bound. He was the chosen object of the great man's attention; he was flattered; a tall, well-made youth of seventeen spoke kindly to him; how can any principle stand against that? he dared not speak. Shame and dread of losing Talbot's esteem overcame everything, and he went on. Oh, the influence of human praise! the dread of human ridicule! and where more than in a boys' school? And yet this is encouraged, abetted, admired, by those who esteem reserve, manliness, and absence of effeminacy, the essence of schoolboy virtues. And what is meant often, but that a schoolboy is to ignore his nature, and be ashamed of God?

Poor Willie! he was an orphan. He had come to

school lone and desolate, six months since, a trembling stranger, fresh from his mother's deathbed. She was one whose every look and word had formed a part of Willie's life. He and his little sister Ella had loved her with no common love. Her tall, slender figure; her long eyelash on the pale face of consumption; the white roses which Willie and Ella had crowned her with in the garden a week before she died, when they thought she was getting well again; her last words of dear affection as she pressed them to her cold clammy lips; her calm, still face after she had gone;—all these were the thoughts with which poor Willie's soul was full when he came to school, alone and desolate, for Ella had gone to a girls' school far away. Many, many nights Willie had cried himself to sleep; and after the other boys in the room had snored off, he had often got up, and in the moonlight read the Bible she had given him, which he dared not show in the school, and thought of her, and looked out at the white moonlight, and remembered the long green glades where he and Ella used to walk with her by moonlight long, long ago. Poor Willie! But "he was but a little fool;" for who but a fool would at a boys' school shed a tear or love a dead mother? He was now enrolled in the ennobling brotherhood of schoolboy life, and that raised him far above poor, weak, human feelings. Poor boy! he had a loving heart, and he looked in vain for something to love; but he had found nothing yet. He did not go home in the holidays, so he never saw Ella; and when he cast his eyes on Basil, he felt a love for him, and the poor child thought that the "new boy" looked at him as if he loved him in turn, though Basil had meant nothing. But Willie thought so, and therefore had dared all for him. He had been so long used to wandering about all alone, companionless, and dwelling with companies of the world unseen, that he seemed to have burst into life again with the imagined love of Basil. "Oh, do, do let me come!" Basil could not help thinking of that cry.

Talbot's study, into which he led Basil, was as small as it could be to be called a room; it was wholly lined with green baize, and this was nailed round with brass-headed

nails. There were some coloured prints on the walls, and several books: a Thucydides, an Herodotus, a well-worn Horace, Cowper, and Byron, and sundry more. The room was very small and very snug, and had a window which looked out towards the far off green fields and blue hills. Tea was laid for one, and the things for one were quickly turned into things for two by calling a fag. Basil had a kind of feeling that he was highly honoured, and felt awkward and uneasy accordingly.

"Sit down," said Talbot. Basil sat. Talbot threw himself on a kind of half couch, with one leg up, and his whole body in repose, and his hands clasped on his waistcoat, while he played *Der Freischutz* with his fore-finger, and waited for the tea to get ready, as he questioned Basil.

"How do you like this school?"

"I don't know yet—not much."

"Oh! Well, I believe you are right; it is not much of a place. Old Dobson is a slow coach; and as to the fellows, they are a bad set: that beast Dance leads them all. How do you like Dance?"

"Not much," said Basil, laughing.

"No, I don't wonder," cried Talbot, as he went on playing the tune; "he's a vulgar dog. What was he making you do?"

"Swear," said Basil.

"And you wouldn't?"

"No."

"Well, you're right; it's vulgar, and I won't have it in the school."

"It wasn't on that account I would not," said Basil, colouring; "I thought it was wicked."

Talbot slightly coloured, and looked vexed; but he had a great self-command, and only said, "What, religious, eh? Well, they shan't make you swear, or anything else you don't like. I am lord here, and you are safe with me."

Basil liked Talbot very much, yet he didn't like his way of talking, quite. He looked so handsome, and proud, and indifferent, that Basil could not help admiring him exceedingly, and felt vastly pleased at his being so kind to him. He longed to ask about the little boy; so he said at last, "Who is the boy they call Willie?"

"Oh, I don't know; not much—a little fool. Why you seem to have taken an interest in him."

"He spoke up for me," said Basil, "and that pleased me."

The two boys talked for some while, and by the time the evening was over, they seemed to have struck up a friendship, although Talbot was three years older than Basil, and much superior in knowledge. But he took a strange liking for Basil, and the boy returned it quickly enough. Boys soon become friends; and many is the friendship for life struck up quickly at school. There is a tinge of heroism and romance about it, a first tasting of the sweets of being able to form a friendship, which has a strange fascination in it, and becomes a strong cement for the after edifice.

CHAPTER III.

WILLIE.

BASIL went to bed. It was his first night at school, and he had seemed to live a life in that one day. His room lay along the long passage, and the door into it stood half open into the passage. The moon was shining, and the white beams were painted broad and beautiful on the floor and on the bed in the room. There was no candle as Basil entered the room. There were two beds, and another box besides his own. Basil was glad at heart he had no more than one companion; he hoped it was not Dance. There was no one in the bed, so Basil had time to look round for himself, and he did so: a slight movement took place, and in a moment more the small figure of Willie came out from the shadow of the window, where he seemed to have been standing. Basil started.

"Please don't be vexed," said the little fellow, with a

timid manner. "I am so glad you are in the room with me; I did beg so hard for it. They used to bully me so of a night, and you won't, I know. I'll be your fag, and do anything you want—mayn't I?" and he sighed deeply. He spoke all this timidly and quickly, and Basil watched his face. There were tears on it, which he could see in the moonlight, and the child looked more winning than he had thought him before.

"That you shall, if you like," said Basil. "I will take care of you; no one shall hurt you in this room."

The child's heart was full, and he leaned his head almost unconsciously on Basil's arm, and burst into tears. "You are so kind to me: it reminds me of my dear mamma, for no one has spoken kind to me since she died."

Basil's heart was touched, for he too had thoughts of the past, which made him bleed. There was a silence.

"Then I shall be able to say my prayers as I used at home. I always have here, but then sometimes I was obliged to say them in bed, for they bullied me so. Do you think that was wrong?"

Basil hardly felt able to give advice, but said that Willie should always have full liberty to do what he would now.

The little fellow knelt down by his bedside; and as Basil watched his figure kneeling, by the moonlight, and saw his hands joined, and heard him whisper the prayer his mother had taught him, he thought, "Oh, where is the monster who would hinder that poor orphan in his approach to God?"

Where, Basil? At every school in England it is the privilege and right of youth to hinder CHRIST's little ones in approaching Him. When He comes and demands these little ones, what is the account that many a sixth-form boy will have to give of those he has tried to pluck from the Shepherd's bosom? The dark oath, the yell of ridicule, the sneer and scoff, the infidel remark, the slight passed on the good,—these are the weapons with which schoolboys often fight against God. What are masters doing, that they will herd boys together in a room, and take such small precaution that they be kept for Him Who bought them with His Blood?

Willie rose from his knees. "I was praying about you," said he, hiding his face in Basil's hand. "You are very kind to me. I hope God will bless you. I know He will. My dear mamma said when she was dying, that God would raise me up friends, and so He has. Would you like to see my mamma? she is so beautiful."

Basil started. "I thought you said she was dead."

"Yes, so she is; but you know I always see her every night, for I have a picture of her so like her; I'll show it you, if you like. I'm always so afraid *they* will see it," said the poor little fellow, trembling as he looked at the door. "Dance did get hold of it once, and he said he would throw it away, if he saw it again."

"Don't fear, my little fellow," said Basil; "no one shall touch it. Show it me."

The poor orphan put his hand to his neck, and drew up a narrow black ribbon, at the end of which was hung a medallion-shaped miniature, set in pearls. The child placed it in Basil's hand, as he looked anxiously up in his face. "She's so beautiful. Those white roses Ella and I put round her before she died."

It was indeed a lovely lady. Basil took it to the moonlight; he gazed on it some minutes: so sweet and heavenly was the smile, so very deep and pensive the blue eye. The figure was elegant; and the whole appearance was of one who lived far above the common works and thoughts and ways of this rough world. Yet death was marked on that pensive brow and sad face. He gave it back to Willie.

"Ella's so like her. Poor Ella! we used always to be together when mamma was alive; but dear mamma said we should come to her soon, and all be together again;" and he replaced the miniature in his bosom, and dried his eyes. He was presently in bed, and soon asleep. Basil watched his calm and quiet face as the moon fell on it. It seemed as if the orphan was aware he slept securely to-night. The little portrait was hung round his neck, and his hand was on it.

Basil looked at him. "Poor little trembler," said he; "as if I would hurt you! No, God give me grace to

help you to heaven, and follow your simple love! At least you have found a friend in me."

"Has he!" said a voice behind with a suppressed laugh. Basil started. Dance and three or four more stood behind him.

Basil's heart beat high: it was the last moment he either expected or hoped to see Dance and his crew.

"What, my young methodist," cried Dance, "so you are going to be captain of a crew of saints here, are you? That game won't do; your friend Talbot won't help you at that, for he is not quite of that sort, after all; he has faults enough."

The loud voice and the noise of the party, who had come in with Dance, awoke Willie, who started trembling from his pillow at the voice of his persecutors. They were his nightmare, and he lived sleeping and waking in terror of them. His hand instinctively flew to the little miniature in his bosom. The room presented a formidable appearance. There was no light but from the moon. Dance was half-dressed: his braces hung down at his heels, and his collar was undone; his face grinned with malicious cruelty. The squadron were all but *sans culotte*. Basil was the only one dressed, and he kept his post resolutely by the side of the alarmed child. "At least, this time," he thought, "I will not desert him, God help me!"

"Hallo, my young orphan, what, you're awake, are you?" cried Dance, making a move towards Willie, who instantaneously clung to Basil's arm, as the sinking mariner to the plank, when the wave rises higher which will overwhelm him. Basil drew between Willie and his persecutors with such firmness as made Dance and his supporters flinch. There is that in moral firmness in a boy which will daunt kings, and Basil felt inspired: he darted a flash of proud and contemptuous defiance at Dance, and said, "You will not touch a hair of his head: I defy you."

War being proclaimed, Basil glanced down the passage through the open door to see if there was any hope of help; but the passage looked long and dark and still; no light but where, here and there, the moonlight shone

white and cold across the floor. He thought of Talbot; but to cry for succour was cowardly, and he was silent.

Dance anticipated the thought, and bade one of his myrmidons shut the door, which he did, and locked it.

"Now sing us a song, young orphan, or I'll have that picture of your departed mother," said Dance, with a sneer: "sing us a song, nightgown and all; and it shall be a hymn, a sacred song," said he, sarcastically, "in the moonlight; such as your mother used to teach you;" and he dropped his voice into a tone of mock feeling. The boys all laughed, and the catastrophe was becoming imminent.

Basil thought rapidly what to do: he felt his blood creep, and his hair stand on end with indignation. He prayed, yes! he prayed; for no scene is a trifle for the boy who would fight for God. The Christian warrior's strife is a strife of trifles.

"I can't sing," said Willie, clinging tightly to Basil's arm.

"Can't!—what, not one of the hymns your mother taught you?" said Dance, mincingly.

"I may not sing hymns now," said the child; "it would not be right."

"Very well," said Dance, quickly; "then I'll have the portrait."

Willie trembled. That little portrait, wet with many an hour's bitter, lonely tears, was his one only treasure.

"Oh, no," said he, eagerly.

"Oh, no!—ha, ha!—oh, yes!—open his box," cried Dance.

One of the boys tore open the box which lay at the foot of the bed. The clothes were dragged out one by one, and scattered on the floor. All eyes were fixed on the process. The Bible came—the Bible he had always read in, which his mother gave him—an old Bible: but he loved it. He knew it as long as he could remember anything, when it used to lie open on the table in the little summer-house on a hot summer's day, and he used to come in and hear her quiet sweet voice reading it by herself, and he was hardly higher than the table. He had such an idea of his mother and that Bible. She

gave it him just before she died. Dance seized it. Willie started convulsively, and looked imploringly into Basil's face: but Basil was motionless. He could not make up his mind what to do. He scarcely dared leave the child's side, though every feeling bade him rush at Dance and knock him down: he felt sure he could. He could have done anything at that moment. The Bible was dropped, and further search made for the portrait, but in vain.

"I say, young fellow, where's the picture? If I don't have it, I'll murder you."

"Oh, no, no, don't have it. I'll do anything,—anything," said he in agony, "which is not wrong. Don't, don't."

His eyes looked so large in the moonlight, and his face so pale with fright and anguish, that one would have thought it would have touched any heart but of that class of beings so often met with at school who have no heart. All was now out of the box, except three apples and a bundle of nuts, and a handful of buttons, which lay at the bottom, and the portrait was not found.

Dance approached the bed. "I won't be mastered by you or your new friend, see if I will;" and he caught hold of Willie with one hand round his arm, and with the other he twisted his fingers in the child's long curling hair. The hair seemed starting from its roots in the head, and the pain drew out drops of perspiration from his forehead. At that moment a gleam of the moonlight shone on the border of the little miniature in Willie's bosom, and, with a yell of joy, Dance caught hold of the long-sought-for prey.

"Oh, don't, don't," cried the orphan, as he caught hold of the medallion. "Do not, do not take it—you must not—you may not. I'll sing, I'll sing."

"Will you?" cried Dance, pausing, but keeping his hand on Willie's head.

"No," said Basil, quietly; "no, he will not sing. Willie, leave it to God."

The advice came in such a form as to inspire the child with courage not his own. He quickly glanced at Basil, whilst his eye gleamed with emotion. "No, I will not. I will not, please God!" and the child fixed his eyes

fully on Basil's face, as if he borrowed firmness from it. Oh, what may not a boy at school do in giving confidence and power to those around him!

Dance seized the portrait, and the string broke.

Willie gave one wild cry, and as Dance rushed from the bed to the window, he flew after him and clung to his arm in the agony of his grief.

"Take that, you young fool," said Dance, striking him a violent blow in the face, which sent him reeling back. The next instant the window was thrown open, and the picture was dashed to pieces on the ground below.

"There it goes," shouted Dance.

"Brute!" cried Basil, starting from the bed, and seizing Dance by the throat with so violent a grasp that the bully reeled back, and the power of fifty boys seemed centred in Basil's arm.

Little Willie lay bleeding on the floor: he had hurt himself violently in falling against Basil. Dance struck Basil, and the fight began. Dance did not stand one moment before the young champion of truth; he retreated, muttering and swearing, and called on the others to help him. Basil, standing before Willie, defied them all, though his single strength could have done nothing against his persecutors. The door suddenly opened, and Talbot stood in the doorway, half-dressed and in the moonlight: he had been roused by the noise, and, with two others behind him, entered the room.

"What's the matter now?" cried he to Basil, whose appearance, flushed and excited, with the orphan bleeding at his feet, aroused still more keenly the interest Talbot had conceived for him. "What's the matter?"

The arrival of Talbot was electrical. Dance muttered. Basil spoke out and told the tale. Talbot advanced towards Dance, who receding said half-muttering something about "Bully—beastly shame—always tyrannizing, sneaking." Talbot slowly and calmly advanced, doubling his neat tight little fist, while Dance as slowly slid round the wall. Talbot's figure was the perfect specimen of coolness and conscious power.

"Say that again, sir." All looked on, amid the deep silence of the little moonlit room. "Say that again, sir,"

said Talbot. Dance put up his arm to his face, as he lowered it towards his bosom, and muttered, "always bullying." The neat tight little fist fitted rapidly in the centre of Dance's face, and the discomfited tyrant cried for mercy.

"All you," said Talbot coolly, "go to your rooms; that beast ought not to be in a respectable society. Something must be done. Basil," said Talbot, frankly stretching out his hand, "I honour and respect you."

Basil returned the grasp, and his heart bounded with joy. Yes, young boy, you had fought the fight of principle and God, and "those who honour Him He will honour."

Poor Willie lay pale, bleeding, and crying on his pillow. Basil did his best to soothe his grief. It was long before the child slept. In the moonlight Basil crept downstairs to find the broken fragments of the picture: he found a few. The face was there uninjured, and with delight he brought it back and laid it on Willie's pillow, that he might see it when he woke. Poor Willie! If a mother's spirit can follow her forsaken and lonely child through the scenes of school-life, oh, how little we know the preservation which may come through her prayers!

CHAPTER IV.

ΟΙ ΑΡΙΣΤΟΙ.

"*Αριστοι*, come here!" shouted Talbot, as he entered the schoolroom next morning; "come to my study."

There was a great stir in the room. The master had not yet come, and when he did, he always gave way to Talbot. Basil looked up to see who the *αριστοι* were.

"Coming," was the answer.

Five boys rose, and followed Talbot out of the room.

"Don't you know the *αριστοι*?" said a boy, who was sitting next Basil, going on writing "*Estramaduras*" as he talked, with his fingers stuck on the top of his pen like two humps on a dromedary.

"No," said Basil, inquiringly.

"How green you are," said Fletcher, still going on writing earnestly.

"Who are they?" said Basil.

"Who, why—that's what."

This monosyllabico-pronominal answer was not very satisfactory, and again Basil asked who they were.

"What! the *aristoi*?" said the other, "who are they? why, the *aristoi*, to be sure; who else should they be?" But at last "Estramaduras" was done, and the young scribe, putting down his pen, said, "Oh, they are *the* six, you know, *the* six. Talbot and five have formed a select society of taste, literature, and morals; and they are very exclusive, and they are very proud, and Dance hates them, and some of our fellows think them fools, and some don't, —and that's what the *aristoi* are; and now they are gone to talk of something about Dance, I believe."

"Oh," said Basil, and he went on with his sum, which he *could not* do, because he could not help thinking whether Talbot would make him an *aristos*.

The *aristoi* met in Talbot's room. The sofa was occupied by Talbot.

The room was so small, that it was hard to find room for the important company, swelling with self-importance, satin waistcoats, and little chains. Breakfast was laid for six, and a fag was there, who felt as much alarm at the possible result of the neglect of his work as a Carolina slave under a planter.

That fagging is the most wonderful illustration of power in the world: your Eastern despotism is nothing, absolutely nothing to it. That has a moral force, a force of religion and love to swell it. Public-school fagging has none of this diluting mixture; there is no recognition of any thing but pure physical might between the parties, the recognition of no principle whatever—clear, pellucid, unadulterated power. But of that anon.

There they were, the *aristoi*, at breakfast. The very thought is sublime; six sixth-form fellows met on a recognised equality, without the least intention of thrashing each other, or reflecting on each other's parentage. There was Wimpkins, tall, thin, black hair, pale, dressed in

mourning because it was more *recherché*, with a perfect collar never out of place, looking as if it was pasted on his cheeks; his hands with two rings on each; always smiling and drawing in his breath; a slight shadow on the upper lip, hinting at what was coming, the misery of manhood and the aim of boyhood. Wimpkins never could bear any thing the least vulgar; in fact, what was not aristocratic; had two pictures of the chief ballet-dancers on his wall; could not think how any one could burn any thing but wax candles, and always burnt wax, though his father and mother always burnt tallow; thought life insupportable without female society, and yet when in it was always enamoured of a lady of thirty-six rather than any thing under. He professed a profound respect for Talbot—his gentlemanliness, his father's county position, his perfect dressing, his *distingué* appearance, all were perfect.

There was Dobbs, fat, round, and jolly, blue jacket, and blue-and-red plaid trousers; thought Wimpkins was a great noodle, but he was an *apôtros*—that's enough; thought Talbot "a jolly dog—capital fellow—do any thing alive for him—no one like him;" talked a good deal of "his governor," who was a dead shot and the greatest hunter in the county, descended long ago from an old English earl—one Lord Dobbs, but never could find it in the peerage—supposed it was too far back—perhaps Saxon, or Danish, perhaps Roman—an Augustan earl: he knew it was the case, and did not care much how. He was small, with sparkling blue eyes, light hair, always good-natured—loved dogs especially.

Then there was Brooke—manly, straightforward, sensible, simple-minded; hated humbug, so he hated Wimpkins; couldn't appreciate slang, and so depreciated Dobbs; honoured a high-minded fellow with a dash of honest pride, and so honoured Talbot; dressed in dark-brown jacket, too short, and showed the waistcoat behind with two white strings, Scotch plaid trousers and black cloth waistcoat; short and brownish, thick-built, and captain of the school in strength. He respected people who had strength; six foot two high was the standard of excellence; the "Guards" the sum-total of earthly position;

a small fellow thinnish and weak, was, in his opinion, clearly of an inferior race to that of man. On his walls he had portraits of Shaw the life-guardsmen in scarlet and blue, with seven cuirassiers pinned on to his sword at once, dangling, moustaches which hung down from his lip like panniers over a mule's back, and eyebrows as shaggy as the pines of the Grindelwald. This was his model of man; he had never yet seen it realised. These made three *αριστοι*.

Then there was Fowle—old Frank Fowle—or, as the fellows called him, “Fanny Fowle.” Not fair or dark, a kind of dun-coloured sandy; weak eyes always, and odd, if any, eyelashes; always had brown sugar at the bottom of his trousers-pocket, and his jacket-pocket stuck out with bull's-eyes or apples; a natty fellow in dress; said his father was chief county gentleman in Warwickshire; thought Talbot a very nice fellow, but was generally indifferent about most things; had no pictures in his room, which had but little mark of any kind: such was Fanny Fowle.

Then there was Trevelyan: very gentlemanly; dressed to a tee; always had an eye-glass and a black hair chain; thin, well-made, and elegant; talked in a low voice; never spoke of his father, though it was known he had one who really was somebody; liked Talbot very much—“a thorough gentleman,” as he said; had a very neat study, with four small coloured prints of Medora, Zuleika, Gulnare, and Kaled, bound round with green baize and brass nails: a mahogany desk clasped with brass; two pairs of Wellingtons, and pumps.

There was one more—Pulteny—whom the fellows called “swat Putty:” very clever, pale, thin, lantern-jaws, very black eyes, dark pencilled eyebrows, long uncut hair, stooping shoulders, tall unwieldy figure; always screwed his eyes up when he spoke, as if he saw a flea on the table, which he was always hunting and never caught; saw great talent in Talbot, though he was idle; read hard, and got all the prizes; had no pictures, but two rows of shelves bordered with green baize, with a yellow-looking Horace and Lucan, a short brown Virgil, Thucydides, 3 vols., Zumpt, Dumesnil and Beausobre, Cicero De Officiis, and Scott's Antiquary.

So much for the *αριστοι*. These were their distinctive features: there were two or three general features in which they all agreed. They all singularly enough, had parents more or less noble, and great county men, with lots of horses and carriages: in fact for a boy *not* to have that kind of father was clearly a disgrace. And yet whenever their fathers had been seen by any chance, they always had appearances strongly against aristocratical descent. Then they all called their fathers "governor;" they all burnt wax candles: though report went in the school, that once when one of the boys went to see Fowle in the holidays, he found him and his father and his mother sitting round a rushlight, which, as Mr. Fowle very incautiously and unnecessarily let out, was done to enable them to afford to send Frank to school. This, however, Fanny Fowle stoutly denied; so it became a myth.

These were the *αριστοι*. Breakfast on the table; Talbot lying half-along with his head on a pillow, looking up at the ceiling; Trevelyan looking through a Byron in the corner; Fowle with his hands in his pockets at the table; Wimpkins at Talbot's head; Brooke and Dobbs standing up; and Pulteney with his face leaning over the tea-tray, still looking after that flea.

"Well, *oi*," said Talbot,—for by that terse name the fraternity went—"I've got a new fellow to propose." He spoke indifferently, looking up as if he didn't much care if they liked it or not.

"Really—oh, how pleasant!" said Wimpkins.

"Pity," said Trevelyan; "I like the old six."

"Big fellow?" said Brooke.

Trevelyan smiled, till the lines round the edges of his mouth grew very keen and deep.

"Oh," said Dobbs; "who?"

"The new fellow, Basil," said Talbot.

"Gentlemanly fellow enough," said Trevelyan.

"Little skinny brute," said Brooke.

"Young silly," said Dobbs; "couldn't be in at the death."

"One objection I see," said Talbot, "is, that we have always been six."

"There are nine books of Herodotus," said Pulteney, still screwing his eyes at the table.

Talbot looked at him over the back of the pillow on which his head was, and stared at him. "Well, and what follows, old silly? Well! what do you say?" continued he; "shall we have him? Will you elect him? Hands up." He was elected, not unanimously; but that is a secret.

"And now," said Talbot, "about that fellow Dance. What shall we do to him? He's a horrible fellow; such a bully. He half murdered that little fellow—what d'ye call him?—last night. I knocked him down, but he wants more."

"His father had a horse that ran at Newmarket," said Dobbs excitedly, with his hands in his pockets.

"I wish old Dobson would weed the school; it is quite a discredit to have such fellows as Dance here," said Trevelyan.

"Well, I'm for handing him up," said Talbot. 'Handing up' was an old punishment at the school; each sixth-form fellow had a stick and gave the offender six cuts on the hand: it was a real punishment, only given for extreme offences. All agreed—Dance was to be handed up. It was done in full force next day; every boy in the school was glad, except Dance himself; he had strong objections. But though he headed a party in the school, no one liked him; he was a thorough bully, with all the faults of such.

The meeting of the *αριστοι* broke up. Talbot hastened to announce to Basil the news that he was an *αριστος*, with just that kind of indifference which marks a youth who takes endless pains to do a thing, and then feels ashamed of showing that he cares about it. But he could not find Basil immediately.

Willie went through his routine of work next morning as usual, but his heart was very heavy and sad. He sighed among his books, and made many mistakes from thinking of other things. He thought of Ella, so very far away; and of his mother, and Basil, and how kind he was, and how very, very much *he* liked Basil. He got into sad disgrace for his work, for he had done it so

slightly. When school was over, and all went out of school, Basil was looking out for him; and when, as usual, the child was starting off alone, Basil put his arm through his and said he would go with him.

"Where are you going, Willie?"

"I was going to search under the boughs if there is any more of my broken picture," said he, with a deep-heaved sigh.

Basil went with him, but the search was fruitless; they found no more. The afternoon was setting in, and Basil proposed to walk. There was a little wood near, and to that they turned. The glow of the now calm evening hovered over the wood and through the boughs, which were almost bare, except where here and there a few yellow leaves still clung to their native bough.

"Isn't this a pretty wood?" said the child, as he led Basil into it.

"Very," said Basil; "do you know it?"

"Oh, yes!" said Willie; "I know it well. I'm often here, because——"

"What?"

"Because," said the child, looking timidly up into Basil's face, "Dance doesn't come here; I'm all alone here, and I like it so much. And there's another reason,—it reminds me of my mamma; and there are wild geraniums, and loads of wood anemonies; mamma said she liked them so, and I come and pick them in summer like Ella and I used."

"Does Dance often bully you?" said Basil.

"Yes," said Willie, anxiously: "he won't ever let me alone: I don't know why. I gave him half those figs Ella sent me, but it didn't do any good: he would never let me say my prayers; he always set the big boys on to stop me, so I used to come here to the wood. Don't you see, in there, among those leaves there?" said the little fellow, pointing in to where, among some boughs which formed a little alcove, a large log lay half covered with yellow leaves. "That is where I always sit; come in."

The little boy pushed aside the boughs, and Basil entered. He looked at the child in wonder: and can a child, then, with no friend near, no adviser, surrounded

by ridicule and opposition, thus "devise means" to serve God! and yet all the while with such simplicity and gentleness that he scarcely seemed conscious he was doing any thing more than usual.

"Dance is very cruel to you," said Basil.

"He is very unkind to me, and I am very much afraid of him; but I don't feel angry with him except when he hurts me, and then I can't help it. My mamma said I was always to forgive what boys did to me if I went to school, and I try to do all that she told me. I and Ella said we would, though we are so far away from each other. Do you think she sees us?" said he, turning suddenly round and speaking in a low and earnest tone.

Basil was startled. "Yes, I should think so: I have always been told so,—that those who are gone watch us."

"I want to ask you one thing: I find it so hard to remember the hymns she used to teach us; and we always used to say them to her every night and morning. May I say them to you? they are such pretty hymns, and I often say them to myself when I am here in the wood all alone."

Willie looked up earnestly into Basil's face and began his hymn, which, he said, he and Ella often said in those few brief weeks they spent together after their mother died:

Dear as thou wert, and justly dear,
We will not weep for thee;
One thought shall check the starting tear—
It is that thou art free.
And thus shall faith's consoling power
The tears of love restrain;
Oh, who that saw thy parting hour
Could wish thee here again?

Triumphant in thy closing eye
The hope of glory shone,
Joy breathed in thy expiring sigh,
To think the fight was won.
Gently the passing spirit fled,
Sustained by grace divine:
Oh, may such grace on me be shed,
And make my end like thine!

He ceased: but the earnest childlike voice in which he spoke the touching words; the joy which lit up his eye, as if he could see the dear figure of her of whom he spoke; the tears which, when he finished, ran over his flushed cheek, so deeply impressed Basil when he remembered the wretched contrasts around,—Dance's odious vice, even Talbot's cold reserve,—that he felt his heart beat with emotion. There was a silence: "I've done," said Willie; "I hope you will pray for me, Basil, that the Good Spirit may keep me good and help me to do His will, that I may go where my own mother is gone. I hope Dance won't make me do wrong."

"No one can," said Basil, earnestly; "no one can, Willie: 'No man is able to pluck them out of My FATHER's hand.'"

"Yes," said Willie, "and—"

"'They that wait upon the LORD,'" said Basil, "'shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles.' 'I love them that love Me, and they that seek Me early shall find Me.'"

Willie listened, as Basil spoke with a degree of earnestness which made his eye beam with holy and intense feeling. "Do go on," said Willie: "it is so beautiful, it so helps me; for no one has talked like that to me since mamma died."

"Basil, Basil! where on earth are you?" shouted a voice in the wood; and the next moment Talbot's manly and agile figure leaped over the hedge and stood before them. Basil coloured with crimson, as his friend's cold, pale eye was fixed on him. Willie did not move; he was looking through the boughs of the trees and thinking of something else. "What on earth are you doing here, Basil, and with that little fool? I want to speak to you."

Talbot was proud and angry. There was a whisper of temptation to Basil to be ashamed. It was only a whisper: Basil was quite determined.

"Talbot," said Basil, laying his hand on Talbot's arm, "I want to speak with you. Talbot, you are taking a wrong line—a wrong line. That child is not a fool; he is a holy child, and you *must* support him. Talbot, if we are to serve God, we can't do it by halves: it's all or nothing." Basil spoke so quietly and firmly, that

Talbot did not know what to answer; he coloured up and looked vexed.

"What's the matter now, Basil? Do you mean to say I am not acting right?—really——"

"Talbot, you don't speak out—you act as if you were ashamed of real religion. You always place good acts on the second or third motives, not the highest. Talbot, what was the conduct of those of old who served God when young—Joseph, David, and Daniel? God cannot love what does not openly and boldly serve Him." Basil ceased; he did not know he could have spoken so decidedly, and he was half frightened at what he had done; and then to such a youth as Talbot was. But he was startled by Talbot, after a minute's silence, dropping his voice and saying in a low tone, "You are right, Basil!"

"You are right, Basil, right—yes, quite right," said Talbot, lingering on the words; "there is nothing like high principle—pshaw!—I mean plainly, there is nothing like doing things to please God." And Talbot with his stick struck off the heads of two or three flowers, and seemed vexed with himself about something. Basil was silent: he was struck and deeply pleased with the open candour and heartfelt earnestness of Talbot's manner.

"Basil, why on earth are fellows such fools?" said Talbot, stopping short, and speaking in a tone of vexation.

"How fools?"

"Why, how fools?—why because here we are some eighty of us, and I will answer for it sixty of us have been taught the way to heaven at home, and have a hundred wishes to do right and so go there, and yet not one of us dare avow it, and we all think it needful to pretend we don't feel it: and here you come, a new fellow, and in a day or two you and I are out with it all. Why on earth couldn't I have had it out before? There are two or three, I know, feel it. Pulteney does, but he's too clever to own it; and Fortescue does, but he's too much of a gentleman to own it; and Walton does, but he's too shy to own it; and I do, Edward Talbot, and I'm too much of a fool to own it."

"And that little orphan does," said Basil, "and he is bold enough to own it."

"No—does he?" said Talbot.

"Yes, to be sure," said Basil.

"I never could bear that fellow; and—"

"You don't know him," said Basil. "Talbot, that child shames us all. His simple faith and love shine too brightly for his lamp to burn long. Shame to those who hinder him."

There was a minute's pause. "True—good—you're right," said Talbot, "you're right; what's to be done, Basil?" and he spoke with such a generous manly humility and frankness, that Basil looked at him in admiration.

"Done, Talbot? why, let us pray to God to help us; and you—you are the leading boy here, take the lead; and—"

"And what?" said Talbot quickly.

"Why," said Basil, "protect that poor persecuted child, and set an example. You know you and several of them were confirmed. Become a communicant, Talbot: it's a shame there should be none among you who are." Basil got it out with difficulty. Talbot coloured, and some angry word sprung to his lip, but he kept it down.

"Basil, who brought you up?"

Basil sighed. "My mother," he said.

"There's a mystery about you, Basil; do you mind telling it me?"

"No, Talbot, I think I would tell you if I knew, but I don't know much." He told Talbot of his mother's disappearance; of her tender love for him, and yet her strange mysterious manner; of the memories woven round that old house and place of childhood, of the figure on the stone steps, and of the refusal of his mother to tell him any thing of the past. "I never dared press her," said Basil with a sigh; "she always seemed wild when I spoke of it, and I long since learned to keep down my inquiries."

Talbot was very thoughtful: "and your name?" said he; "your name, I believe, is an assumed one, Basil."

"Langford my mother was called."

"Langford!" said Talbot, starting, but was again silent. "Do you ever expect to see your mother again?" Basil did not answer, for the tears filled his eyes. "I beg your pardon, Basil," said Talbot, taking his hand warmly and affectionately; "I was wrong, very wrong to pain you so; I ought not: I do like you, nay I love you very much. I trust we shall always be real, deep, true friends."

Basil earnestly returned Talbot's affectionate love. He was flattered; nay more, he really loved him and admired him.

"This little verse I found on my bed when my mother was gone," said Basil, drawing a little paper from his bosom; "I have kept it ever since: here it is."

Talbot took it; but his face showed emotion as he read it.

"Weeping, wailing, woe, and sorrow
O'er the noble infant fell,
But there'll be a bright to-morrow
For the heir of Arundel."

"It's very strange," said Basil; "I fancied I knew them and had heard them before, but I cannot remember where."

Talbot was lost in thought, and by this time the two friends had reached Talbot's study. They were becoming real friends quickly.

CHAPTER V.

DANCE.

THERE was a room called "fourth-class reading-room." It was where the princes of the lower school had tea, bullied without law, ruled supreme, legislated, wrote impositions, and read slang poetry. Dance was supreme

here: he too, like Talbot, had his admirers, his band and circle of strenuous friends. These were a set in the school who wore their collars like Dance, had the same coloured jackets, and let the moustache grow the same length; and in this room these sublime ones met. Here they sat hatching their eggs of mischief half the evening. There was a sofa, large and dirty, with a striped green cover torn to rags, and strong signs of macassar on the two ends, and a peculiar odour of "the weed" pervading it generally; one table, deal, with 220 names cut in it, three pairs of gallows with men hanging; one very long gutter channelled down the middle with a penknife, a bookcase with no edging, a few books lying about on the shelves,—*"Frankenstein," "The Three Spaniards," "The Mysteries of Udolpho," "The Universal Rhymer,"* and a few more; eight or ten chairs completed the furniture. There were pictures, too, on the wall; *"In at the Death,"* with one man in a red jacket, with his head underground and his top-boots up in the air, and a horse lying on his back, with his head looking singularly through two hind legs at his rider, as if he was saying, "Well, old fellow, how do you feel?" Both appeared unhappy, while a cloud of dogs figured in the distance. *"Dick Turpin"* was another picture; *"the last murder,"* with a portrait of the murderer; and *"A Prize Fight."*

To-night there was clearly a call of the house, a momentous stir was going on, and the hive hummed again. O ye *αριστοι*, your sublime gatherings are nothing to it! Dance had been handed up; the lower school were in a fury. Vengeance on the aristocrats! *"Mons Sacer"* and a secession were the only chance. There was a hillock beyond the playground, made of the clay dug out of a small fishpond; but if they had seceded to that they would probably have sat till they starved before any Agrippa came; and if Agrippa did come, he would have come in the shape of old Dobson; and they would all have been flogged, and that would have been a horrid bore; so they did not go, but stayed to deliberate *"Vengeance—vengeance!"* on some one or thing. But on whom?—ah, there is the question. Vengeance on Talbot was about as absurd as it would be for a judicial assembly

of water-wagtails to determine vengeance on a hawk; and all the *αριστοι* were bound together. They might easily "kill" Swat Putty, for he was as blind as a bat, and thin as a lath, and always went groping about the passages like *Œdipus Coloneus*. But then, at the first sound, he would shoot into his study and out would come Dobbs and Brooke, both "*οις*," and woe betide the lower school. Willie!—ah, Willie, he was the cause of the trouble, on his head let the vengeance fall; none care for him. The new boy does not matter, and Talbot despises Willie.

Poor little trembler! with your solitary yearnings for her who is in "the land" which is "very far off," and your dreams of Ella and the white roses: yes, let the vengeance fall on you. Poor Willie! you are the type of many a little one who has shuddered in life's cold and chilly stream, the victim of "the bully." *You* are not lost; but oh, how many have been torn from the shepherd's bosom by those hands which work in the wake of the spirit of darkness, the bullies of our public and private schools. Yes, Willie shall "be the victim."

The thought seemed to strike and please. "He shall suffer; yes, it is just and right; he has been the cause of all," said Dance, smiling vindictively. "Yes, *the* little brute!" and he snuffled with satisfaction, and thrust his hands down to the depths of his pockets, and shrugging up his shoulders to his ears proceeded to dance a *pas seul*. "I quite love that little pet now," continued he. "I quite begin to see the animal's virtues now that I see the way to true discipline: we shall make something of him. What shall we do to him? a signal infliction, eh?"

One of the venerable council was a boy named Snicketts; he lived with two aunts at Dorking, who had always lived there, in the memory of the oldest inhabitant. He was their torment through every holidays, and led them so wretched a life that they often wished he had never been left on their hands. They had a small white house with green Venetians, a long narrow garden in front, with lilacs and laburnums for a hedge and a row of standard rose-trees down the pathway. Snicketts had red hair and red eye-lashes, a freckled face, thick lips,

and wore a sort of French jacket, palish blue with embroidery.

"I should propose the river—a cold bath; nothing like a cold bath taken at night by moonlight for cats and nervous little boys. A sure correction; I should propose the river." As he spoke he stood leaning against the wall, protruding his chin and trying to touch the wall with the crown of his head.

"Capital!" shouted Dance, who suddenly stopped in his dance and looked at Snicketts; "that is capital; worthy of your fertile brain, old Snicky; you're the fellow, after all. We'll take him down in the evening when Talbot and that new fellow are out of the way, and we'll do it by moonlight; it'll be more imposing and dramatic. I hope the fellow won't drown though—it'll be a bore."

"Oh, drown, no," said Spurling, who had been at six schools before and expelled from all; two commercial academies, three seminaries, and one private school. "Oh, no; I've seen many a fellow ducked, and they always swim out: every cat can swim for its life. It's such fun to see a young suckling swim for his life to shore, he splashes so." Spurling was a great authority in the under-school reading-room; he had seen so much of life.

There was a river, the Lee it was called, a quick rapid current which ran among the meadows about a mile from the school. It was a well-known stream there; very beautiful in summer, with its sedgy banks and lines of willows and flowers and blue flies, and it ran by a mill and through a little copse which was a favourite resort of the boys in summer days. But in winter the Lee was a quick rushing torrent, and as it ran headlong through the copse under the leafless boughs, it was often swollen; it gave one a desolate feeling in winter, and few frequented its banks, especially at night, for it was dangerous. This was to be the scene of poor Willie's punishment. Dance stood ruminating: there was something murderous in the twinkle of his eye as he smiled with pleasure at the calculations he made, and all seemed to come just as he wished. He sat down on the sofa and stretched out his

legs, and looked round to the right and to the left, and laughed hysterically.

"Capital!" cried he, "capital!—we've done it. Capital! isn't it, old cove?" said he, addressing a heavy, sullen-looking fellow who sat on the sofa beside him reading "The Three Spaniards." "Isn't it?"

Turton grunted, but did not look off. "Isn't it?" said Dance, again pushing him. Turton grunted. "Isn't it?" cried Dance, excitedly, and pushed so hard that the book fell from Turton's hand. This was too much; Turton started up and struck Dance in the side. Dance grumbled, and with his hands still in his pockets made a sitting leap towards the bolster at the other end. Turton had tasted the delight of conquest, and his appetite was whetted; he pursued his retreating foe with a calm soft smile of interest, and calmly boxed Dance's left ear. Dance uttered deep monosyllables in his throat about the difficulty he felt in seeing the justice of Turton's line. A third blow, dealt with the same calm deliberate smile, while Turton winked his eye at the surrounding company, brought from the discomfited hero a howl of rage, which made Turton more calm and peaceful still.

Such was the scene in the lower school-room, while Basil was wandering home with Talbot, and a strange deep feeling was passing over the mind of the latter. Basil was doing his work. They came so like two school-boys in an evening walk; earnest in converse, so full of each other; bathing in the new passion stream of first-discovered love.

Basil had gone to bed: the moon shone still, and he had been asleep half-an-hour; quietly, peacefully asleep, calm in mind after a day in which he had done real work—work for God and the soul of his fellow-creature. He was full of Talbot, quite full; he could think of nothing else; he dreamed of him. His proud blue eye, his way of dressing, his voice, his intonation! Basil felt so proud of them; felt as if they were all his own, his property; and though he really felt deeply, religiously thankful to God for being of use to Talbot, there was that deep, decided dash of self-complacency about it which is peculiarly a

schoolboy's property. He was proud of Talbot and of being Talbot's friend; he felt a spirit of exclusiveness grow up around him quietly and imperceptibly, which made him in his dreams almost laugh, and draw off from little Willie, who was just now standing at his pillow and waiting to awake him.

"Basil!" said he. Basil started up. "Basil!" said the little fellow, half hesitatingly, "don't be startled; I want to ask you something."

"Well?" said the other.

"Well?—why it's very odd—very: but I can't help it—very odd. But do you know, I'm so sorry that Dance was handed up on my account; I've been so sorry ever since, and I think I ought to tell him I'm very sorry, for I am sure I am very sorry indeed—very—although he was unkind to me when he broke my own mother's portrait; but I do forgive that, as I know I ought; and I want to go and tell Dance I'm so sorry he was handed up." And the little fellow stood pleading his cause in his night-gown, as Basil lay in bed, with child-like earnestness.

"Well," said Basil, putting both his hands under the back of his head, which he rolled about in them like a ball in a saucer and yawning, drawing up one knee in bed, on the top of which the moon shone as on a snowy Alp. "Well; what for? he'll call you a fool for your pains, and you'll get nothing."

"But I should like it: I think I ought."

"Oh, go, if you like; there's no need, though. Dance is a beast, and he'll only bully you the more."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes."

"But still I'll go."

"Oh, well, be off—I'm sleepy."

Willie was silent a moment, as if in thought; he thought Basil was short in his manner, and so he was. Basil was a little spoilt by his influence with Talbot; but Willie had a work to do, and he could not then stop to discuss any point with Basil. Away he went down the long passage towards Dance's room, full of his simple holy purpose of love and forgiveness. Poor child! he

was acting on the dictates of his own conscience and his sense of right; a single path lay before him, by which to please God and keep his own mind quiet. Foolish he might be, but he cared little; he lived for a better place in the other world;—"Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of God."

He knocked at Dance's door; the bully was in bed, and roared out, "Come in." In walked Willie accordingly, and stood by the side of Dance. Dance stared: his first impulse, of course, was to knock him down.

"Oh, Dance, I came to say I was very sorry for having got you into trouble and to be handed up; and I am sure I did not mean it. But I hope you will forgive me; you know I cannot help loving that little portrait, because of my mother who is dead, you know."

A sudden light shone on Dance's face, and for the moment he seemed full of a thought which occupied his mind. He turned round in his bed, and leaning his face on his hand looked Willie full in the face.

"Dear little boy!" said Dance, with a tone of deep, pathetic feeling. "Dear little boy! I may indeed learn a lesson of you; I wish I could;—so simple and so forgiving! Yes, indeed I forgive you; I did indeed deserve it, and much more, for my conduct to you." And Dance sighed. Poor fellow! as he lay there with his shirt-collar open and his chin on his hand, he seemed the picture of regret.

"How kind you are!" said Willie; "I had no idea you would be so kind;" and the little fellow's eyes sparkled with pleasure under the sudden reflection that he had won an old enemy. "Basil thought you would be cross."

"Did he?" said Dance, emphatically; "did he, though? then that new fellow does not know me. It is only my vile temper that makes me cross, and I am always sorry, very sorry for it. Do not trust that Basil too much, Willie; I know something about him; he will deceive you. Well," he said, after a pause, "I hope I have learnt a lesson to-night I shall never, never forget—such a forgiving little fellow!" and Dance took the child's hand in his own, and pressed it to his heart.

Willie returned to his room full of joy and peace; he had made his peace; he had no one in the whole wide world who was his foe; he had forgiven for CHRIST's sake the being who had most injured him, and "his own mother" could look at him when he fell asleep, and feel he was coming to her. He knelt down and prayed while Basil slept, and soon the child's head was calmly lying on his peaceful pillow. Yes, sleep, poor trembler! sleep in peace: your brief and bitter day may be briefer than you imagine; and long before you expect you may win that crown which He offers to those who overcome.

"I say, Stocker," said Dance, calling through a half-open door in the next room; "I say—such fun! what *do* you think? the little darling has been here in his night-shirt breathing forgiveness. Oh, sweet child, to hear his innocent pleading! I say, old fellow, my tough old heart gave way;" and he laughed loud and hoarsely.

"Capital!" said a voice from the next room; "capital! you don't say so!" and the next moment a figure stood in the crevice of the door with his night-gown half open; his dishevelled hair hung over his eyes, a pale unwashed face peering out through the long tresses. "Capital, old cove! Did you speak a word about the river—the cool, delicious stream?"

"No, dear little innocent!" said Dance, "no, I didn't; I feared it might cool his love; he looked so forgiving. Oh, Stocker, would you had seen him! you would never have forgotten it." And Dance wept—wept while Stocker laughed. "Well, all I can say is," said Dance, in a touching tone of sadness, "I trust I may remember his sweet manner when I place him beneath the cold tide, and soothe his faint struggles in my 'fraternal arms.'" And Dance and Stocker smiled, nay laughed; and laughing, again slept.

Slept? yes, all slept in the school, and the long passage with all the little bedroom doors was quiet, and the moon shone in quietly on the passage-floor, and the spiders played noiselessly; and there was no sound except from the heavy breathing of sleeping boys which came here and there from the crevices, and every now and then one

turned or spoke in his sleep. All slept in the school; and if the angel of death had trodden that silent passage and stayed at each door, who were ready for the summons? Type of the dawn of the everlasting morning, who in that school were ready to be called from the sleep of death? Schoolboys, ask yourselves who were ready last night in your school—who?

All slept. Talbot proudly and gaily, and the half-suppressed curl played yet round his lips as he dreamt of Basil and better efforts; he had resolved that night, before he lay down, to fight hard and struggle with self, and overcome. His intention was sincere, deep, and earnest. Basil slept full of lofty thoughts, of doing good and showing a holy and consistent example, if he might by God's help: he was full of calm, lofty courage, and it was strengthened by prayer. And Dance slept; and he dreamt of Willie, and he laughed in his sleep, and he thought of the river, a cold flowing river, and struggles under the stream; and he laughed again in his wild sleep, and Stocker laughed in answer from the room inside.

And the river went on rolling and murmuring through the long night, ebbing in and out of the green grass banks, and washing round the roots of the still, old willow trees, with their pollard heads; on rushed the river in the lonely, solitary fields.

And Willie slept—slept calmly and quietly under the moon, and he dreamt of the New Jerusalem, and a bright flowing "river which makes glad the city of God;" and of a street whose pavement is of jewels, and the house "whose builder and maker is God." Then he saw his mother walking in radiant white, and he dreamt she turned round and smiled more lovingly than she had that last day of dying; and she smiled on him, and beckoned to him, for he thought he stood at a door at the end and was looking through at her, and she bid him come, and he looked to see who would open the door, and One opened it, Who said as He opened it, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Dear Willie!

"Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee."

CHAPTER VI.

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

WILLIE had faults: he was fretful and passionate, he could not bear being worried and irritated, and sometimes he flew into violent tempers, which of course Dance and his friends loved to fan and excite. Then Willie was not clever or quick; he never could get through his exercises in time, and got into sad difficulties. Half the reason was, that very often he was spending his time in doing other boys' exercises; but he was often in difficulties, and got many angry words from the master.

The boys were all in school; and the young ones, perched on high stools, were leaning their heads on the desks, writing in that odd, precise, slanting way, which looks exactly as if their noses must rub out the last line they wrote. Mr. Dobson was sitting in a corner, his spectacles were on, and he was hearing a class construe Cæsar; nine oranges, half-peeled, lay on the chimney-piece. Mr. Dobson was a self-denying schoolmaster, and went on the plan of Colonel Clive, of endearing his pupils to him by inuring them to hardships which he himself shared with them; but if he shared their hardships, they never shared his pleasures. One of his hardships was the schoolroom, where he spent many hours with them, dreaming in that black horsehair chair, and hearing well-known passages of Cæsar, and caning every fifth minute. He was always bidding them "see how he went through such trouble for them and with them; how much time he gave up for such ungrateful boys; how few would do it; and how one day, when too late, they would learn the golden chance they had lost." Then he ate two oranges, and went on. Willie, who sat writing away with his face slanting on the desk, could not see what his hardship was, as he had heard Mr. Dobson was paid for his trouble; and besides, he could not see how he was so un-

grateful, for he had never been guilty of any ungrateful thought towards Mr. Dobson. But at last he became quite used to this sort of talking, so he ceased to question it.

"Let us have a Willie bait," whispered Dance, who with some of the big fellows was preparing Ovid at the other end of the room. They had long been cutting out their names on the desk. Certain boys seem to come into the world under a kind of destiny that they must cut out their names a certain number of times, and till it is fulfilled they cannot rest; some cut it out thirteen hundred and seventy times; those big fellows were now doing it one for the twentieth time, another for the fifteenth.

"Are you preparing Cæsar there, Dance?" shouted Mr. Dobson.

"Yes, sir," said Dance, briskly; "yes, sir, almost done—done down to '*nomina inscribunt*;' it is so hard, sir, we cannot go beyond."

"Have you done your derivations?" called Mr. Dobson. Derivations were papers of words looked out, and their grammar written down.

"Yes, sir—not quite," said Dance. "Write them out in a minute," said he in a low voice to Willie, "or I will kill you." Willie hesitated.

"Bring what you have done," said the master.

"In a moment, sir," said Dance, pulling Willie by the hair and pinching him, as he urged him to proceed at a quicker pace. Willie cried out, for the pain was great.

"What is that noise?" said Mr. Dobson.

"Oh, sir," said Dance, "it is the boy Willie; he is always disturbing us, and we try in vain to do any work."

The papers were at length taken up to the master; but poor Willie, who had been compulsorily working for the rest, had not done his own work, and when called up betrayed by his manner there was something wrong.

"Where is your exercise, sir?" said Mr. Dobson. Willie hung his head and was silent: betray the others he would not, and he dared not. "What has the boy been doing?" said the master fiercely to Dance.

"Now for a bait," said Dance to his companions.

"He has been disturbing all the rest, sir, by cutting out his name on the desk."

"Very well, sir; I see how it is, sir—you are incorrigible, sir; so young, sir, and so determined to be indolent and rebellious!" and Mr. Dobson pushed his spectacles towards his forehead and looked at Willie with his eyes underneath them, and seemed eyeing him as if taking an aim at him; and then slowly rising from his chair, he calmly took down his cane.

"Now for it," said Dance. Meanwhile Willie stood in the centre with his head down and his lip quivering; he knew he was innocent, but generosity and fear sealed his lips: the pain he cared little for; what he did care for was the shame it brought him into throughout the school, and the being regarded as amongst the bad, when he longed to do right. But it would be almost death to betray Dance. Every second was precious, for the vast figure was moving towards him, cane in hand, and Dance in delight was pushing and nudging all around him to enjoy the sight with him. Talbot entered. Mr. Dobson paused. Talbot looked round the room, and Dance winced; Willie suddenly started and looked up. Talbot had never been kind to him, still in every mind in the school was mixed up an impression of generosity and justice in connection with Talbot.

Talbot was in no mood at that moment to see Willie suffer; he was fresh from another talk with Basil, and his open, manly disposition was rounding a rock in his journey of life. Talbot had many faults, and some sprang from being spoilt. Mr. Dobson was a man of no personal weight, and he not only respected but feared Talbot. Talbot nearly ruled all; all felt for him what they felt for no one else, and the cry of public opinion went up to Mr. Dobson. A colour mounted to the poor child's forehead, and hope beamed in his eye; he glanced at Talbot.

"This boy, sir," said Mr. Dobson, looking at the hero as he entered with an eye and manner that indicated that he felt it needful to apologise to Talbot for the punishment he was about to inflict,—“this boy is incorrigible, I fear; he is idle and underhand in all his deal-

ings, and I am compelled to proceed to lengths that you all know I deprecate." So saying, the schoolmaster, having gained courage by having made this apologetic address, seized Willie by the back of the neck. Talbot turned pale and his lip quivered; his frame shook with indignation.

"Stop, sir, pray stop; there is some foul play here. I have too long supported a false cause in this school, and I regret it; I will do so no more. Willie must not be punished," and Talbot laid his hand of protection on the shoulder of the trembling boy.

Mr. Dobson, half indignant, half alarmed, felt it necessary for his position to resist this unexpected interference.

"What, sir," said he, "do you intend to interfere with my power over my pupils?"

"Forgive me, sir," said Talbot; "I assure you I do not mean to offend; but there is a clique in this school—a wicked clique, a mean-spirited, tyrannical, and lying clique—of which yonder Dance is at the head."

The bold, firm manner of the generous youth produced a sensation round the whole schoolroom; pens and pencils were laid down, and many an eye peered from under bushes of shaggy hair, watching the scene in the middle of the room.

"Dance, Dance," said a number of voices round the discomfited hero, "don't take it from him; stand up to him; you must—you must for your credit's sake;" for Dance's party reckoned on the final support of Mr. Dobson, if only their captain would make something like a bold stand; and they read in Mr. Dobson's face an expression of extreme annoyance at Talbot's untimely interference. Mr. Dobson was the Lord Stanley of the battle, and it was clear whichever way his pique or fancy might lead him to decide, it would determine the victory; but conscious guilt made Richard the Third hesitate; and conscious of a good cause, the Richmond of the contest interposed with so much rapidity and firmness, that Mr. Dobson had nothing for it but to throw the weight of his position into Talbot's scale.

"I will lay down any stake, sir," said Talbot, "that

this child is innocent." The charge was briefly narrated, and Talbot catching up suddenly the exercises which Dance and his party had professed to do, detected at a glance the compulsory handwriting of Willie. "There, sir," said Talbot, throwing down the papers, "*palmarum qui meruit, ferat*;" and with a proud, indignant glance round the room, he led Willie out and closed the door.

"I wonder Mr. Dobson stands it from him," said Dance, in a voice loud enough to be overheard. "If I ever," said a voice; "Well, I never," said a second; "I never did," said a third; till what had begun with Dance in a low whisper, pattered round the room as loud as hail upon a skylight, and Mr. Dobson's wrath was raised to the highest pitch; his honour was clearly gone if he suffered interference with his authority to go unscathed.

"Call that boy back," said Mr. Dobson, in extreme wrath, addressing Dance; but Dance felt it very doubtful how far the laws of nations would be respected in the enemy's camp, and the rights of the ambassador considered. Stocker and Pointz offered to go with him, and, surrounded by this body-guard, Dance approached Talbot's study. There is an awe to every beast of the forest about the rudest lair of the lion; and there are few scenes in the world, in spite of its smallness, which so inspire awe as the study of a sixth-form boy in a large public school. Stocker opened the door, and Dance entered under cover of Stocker's breastwork. The hero was seated in his chair, and the *apostoi* were round him; a hasty council had been summoned before the tribunal.

It was a half-holiday: a cold, windy day, and the clouds scudded rapidly over the sky, hurrying along as if on a message from the east to the west. It had been wet all day, and the fields were saturated and drenched with water. The boys' usual game at this time was football, but there seemed little stirring; some other game seemed afloat.

"All ready?" said Dance's voice to a small party of boys who were grouped together in the court-yard, with

large worsted gloves on and old hats, while two little dogs were running and yelping at their heels.

"All right," was the answer from many voices.

"Won't it be a lark?" said Dance. "It's quite the right day for it. I've got two scores to pay off, and neither of them small ones either: that fellow Talbot hasn't got scent, I hope, or the hopeful new *apiotes*, or the game's up."

"Oh, no," said Stocker; "no fear. Talbot and the new fellow went out just now on a walk: they are gone to talk good, and Talbot passed us all as if he was too good to touch the ground under his feet, still more to look at us. They are safe enough out of ear-shot."

"Good, that's right—capital, old fellows. Now, then, where's the darling?"

"Gone to Larken's. I saw him go just now: he's gone to tell his sad lament to Mrs. Larken—poor little orphan," said Stocker.

"Come along," shouted Dance; and the gang started off in search of Willie.

Willie had not been happy lately. Basil did not take quite the notice of him which he used—not quite; he was flattered by Talbot, and rather lifted up by the influence he held over him. There always is a strong temptation to gain influence over those at all cleverer and prouder than oneself, and boys especially find it hard to stand against this. It was not that Basil loved and cared for Willie less; he did care deeply for him, but he forgot him often at times, and in things where he used to attend to him. Willie felt this, but he hardly fretted about it; he was a simple boy, and had a strong idea about doing what his mother had told him, and what Ella was most likely doing, and he used to dwell upon all sorts of happy thoughts which came into his mind, and sweet dreams which did sometimes come across him in sleep, and these made him so happy that he cared very little about most things. He was always sadly puzzled at lessons. He intended to do them well, because he knew he ought; but then it was hard work, and he often found his eye wandering after Basil, and

wondering whether he would walk with him after school was over.

"Basil, do help me with this exercise; I cannot do it," said he. "What is the perfect of *cano*? I cannot remember."

"I must not help you," said Basil, a little quickly; "it is not right."

Willie coloured up.

"I did not mean to do wrong," said the child; "only you used to help me, and so I thought you would. I am sure I would not do wrong about it."

Willie stopped and drew a little tree on his slate with a listless air of indifference. Basil was touched by his manner, and sat down by him.

"Willie, I did not mean to be unkind. Let's see—*cano*, perfect *cecini*. There, now we will do the exercise all right;" and Basil did it, but Willie seemed indifferent.

"I did not want you to do any thing wrong. I wish you had not done it."

"Oh, never mind," said Basil; "I did not mean what I said."

But Willie was not satisfied: right and wrong were realities to him, not feelings only; and he felt perplexed at Basil's way of settling the matter so easily. But Willie was not only a very young boy, but very child-like in mind and thoughts; and while he was perplexed at a difficulty himself, he never went on to see even that another was wrong. Dear Willie! how blessed to have that mind, but how hard to gain; it must be genuine, useless as an imitation!

Basil was deeply impressed by this little event; it made him reflect and look into himself, and he began to see many faults he had no idea of. Because he had loved, valued, and patronised Willie; because he had borne much on account of him; because he had influenced Talbot,—he thought his work was done, and that he had no more to do with himself. How little he knew the agony with which God's troubling hand throws to the surface the deep-down weeds of sin and infirmity, so that often our dying hour is disturbed by weeding the last sin from the hidden recess of our conscience!

"Willie, I cannot walk this evening, but I will to-morrow; and we will go into the little wood together and read."

The little boy's eyes sparkled with delight. "Oh, yes, do!" said he; "and this afternoon I will go down to Jemmy Larken's, and talk about those roses he said he was planting for me. I like going there so. Oh, yes, it will be so nice, and we will have our walk to-morrow."

The winter afternoon was fading gradually away behind the dull grey clouds which floated and flew quickly over the sky, like a lace veil which hides with its drapery a brilliant radiance beyond. Willie had been moving about a little garden which was before a cottage, where many of the young boys of the school often wandered in the evening and on the half-holidays. It was a well-known cottage, and widow Larken was a great friend of all the young ones; she would let them gather round her blazing fire on cold winter evenings, and bake them little pies in her oven; there too, tradition said, had been of old great fish suppers made of fish caught by parties in the early mornings.

Tales went of times when peas and bacon had been cooked on the cottage fire, and carried, sheltered by the widow's bonnet, across to the school. She was a good woman in her intentions, but perhaps not as discreet as she might be; and though Mr. Dobson winked at her and her cottage, he always spoke with considerable dignity and severity about "hoping that no one visited Mrs. Larken."

In the garden, Willie had been talking to Jemmy for half an hour; some hyacinths which he had brought from home had been planted in some pots of the widow's, and Willie's delight had been to watch them.

"Hollo! young'un," cried Dance's voice at the gate, "what are you doing here? we want another hand down at the river; we're going to pull the punt across, come along with us."

"I had rather not," said Willie, moving closer to Jemmy. "I don't want to come just now."

"Oh, but you must," said Dance, as he advanced up the path and laid his hands on Willie's arm.

"For shame, Mr. Dance," said the widow, crying out; "how you big young gentlemen are always worrying and teasing these little ones! you ought to be ashamed of it, that you should: if I was them, I would soon—"

"What?" said Dance, scoffingly; "do what, widow?" as he drew Willie quietly and gently off. The poor child turned very pale, but he did not resist, for he remembered how kind Dance had been on the previous night, and he longed, if he could, to propitiate him.

On walked the party over the stiles and down the field paths; but the afternoon drew in quicker and quicker, and seemed to threaten an early dark. They talked merrily and cheerily as they went along, and Willie sometimes detected little side winks and whisperings, which made him not quite easy; but he was a trusting child, and thought it better to trust this time. On they walked, and at last the low rushing sound of the Lee, floating and running and washing in and out of the weeds and rushes, and round old bending willow-trees, fell on their ears.

"There's the punt," shouted Dance, jumping over the stile; "we shall soon run down the stream before dark."

"I had rather go back," said Willie, who, like many a stronger child, had a peculiar and indescribable dread of closing evenings and rushing waters; it brought before his mind sad and half-terrifying thoughts which he could not understand.

"No, no; go back; no," said Stocker; "no, no; there's a little dear, I will lift you over the stile;" so saying, he roughly caught hold of Willie, and dragged him over the stile.

"What's the matter?" shouted Dance, "what's the matter? You beast of a bully, Stocker, what are you at with the little saint? he is very tender, and cannot bear rough usage: I won't have him hurt; 'I am Sir Olydore, and will have a lance through you,' as old Spenser says."

"Oh dear, no," said Stocker; "I am not hurting him; would not for the world."

Dance came back, and laying his hand on Willie's other arm, helped to drag the unwilling victim on.

CHAPTER VII.

LETTERS HOME.

THE *apieroi* sat—sat in Talbot's room, and they sat on Dance, on whom they had been sitting now several times. What was to be done? His vulgarity annoyed Talbot, and his wickedness continually aroused Basil; so that between them all, Dance, the captain of the lower school, was likely to undergo a long incubation. It was determined that Mr. Dobson should be requested to part with him—that he must go, or he would bring down discredit on all connected with the place; but all feared Mr. Dobson's moral courage in the matter. Dance's father was the centre of a connection, and a large one, and his alienation might damage credit.

Talbot had discussed it with Mr. Dobson several times, and the old gentleman had always fully recognised the necessity and importance of the move; but he could not be persuaded to act. He did one day go as far as to write a letter to Dance's father, but he never sent it:

“DEAR SIR,—Your son having attained all the knowledge necessary for the perfect education of a gentleman of his distinguished rank in society, it is my conviction that his interest will be furthered by quitting my establishment, and proceeding to the University,” &c.

But a melancholy recollection that Dance had an uncle who was provokingly fond of Horace, who was sure, on sight of Mr. Dobson's letter, to examine him in the *Epodes*, and the sorrowful conviction that the accomplished youth would be floored at every line, made poor Mr. Dobson with a sigh destroy the letter.

In consequence of this sad imbecility of purpose, it was that the *apieroi* were now sitting. An important resolution put by Talbot had to be carried, to the following effect: that all the *apieroi* were determined to leave immediately. On this astounding thesis each *apieroi* had to speak.

"Gentlemen," said Talbot, "I have determined on sacrificing myself to the sense of honour and high principle. I have determined to demand of my father a permission to leave Mr. Dobson's establishment, under the conviction that it is no longer consistent with the character of a gentleman. The army is my destination, and the Blues."

The announcement was astounding. Various alarms were awakened in many breasts. Some felt sad misgivings as to the opinions and feelings of "governors;" some were doubtful how far they were inclined to make themselves victims to honour alone.

"Well, gentlemen," said Talbot, moving his left leg loungingly over the arm of his chair, while, looking up into the ceiling, he played with his gold watch-chain;—"and how do you feel?"

"Well," said Trevelyan, "I quite feel with you, Talbot. No one can doubt the truth of your proposition. Yes; my mother, I am sure, will not object."

Lady Trevelyan was the sole director of her son's destinies and movements. She was very refined and elegant; had a high Roman nose, with a small pimple on the edge; pale blue eyes, which looked indifferent at every thing; breathed softly, but sighingly, when she spoke; and shook bows from her cap at every movement of her indolent arm. Such was Trevelyan's mother; and of her entire approbation of all he wished he was quite sure. She was a sensible woman, but spoiled him; had given him enlarged views and tended to form a strong character in him, but at the same time indulged him to excess. The letter was written next day; for it was determined the letters were all to be written and shown to Mr. Dobson as a *ruse* to alarm him at the idea of losing the *apostols*.

"DEAR MADAM,—I am sure that you will feel that my request to leave Mr. Dobson's school is not ill-timed, when I assure you that he is admitting youths whose parents your ladyship would never consent to meet in society. In fact, I have long been tired of the place; all I can gain from it I feel I have gained; I am convinced a

private tutor, before going to Cambridge, is the more usual course, and according to *ton*.

"I trust, dear mother, you have guarded against cold during the season.

"Ever your affectionate son,
"CHAS. TREVELYAN."

Lady Trevelyan read the letter at breakfast, as she was sipping her chocolate and sitting opposite Miss Hume, who was her companion, (i.e., technically, not pleasantly.)

"Dear Charles! he is so refined and proper in all his feelings. 'Meet in society.' Miss Hume, my dear, will you read this for me, for I cannot make it all out?"

The letter dropped into Miss Hume's hand, and the pale blue eye looked hazily at the next cup of chocolate, and Miss Hume read the letter.

"Dear fellow," said Lady Trevelyan, with a sigh, as lightly breathed as the west wind in a July evening.

"Oh, I quite feel with you," said Frank Fowle, "quite. He is a beast. Oh, certainly. Then, as to the leaving, —yes,—I don't quite know what my father might say. But he's rich,—lots of tin,—and I dare say would place me at another school, or the University. Oh, yes," said he, with a deep-drawn breath, as if he felt just a little perplexed.

"DEAR DAD,—I want to leave; can't you find a clerk's place? I know you can't afford to do anything for me, as you haven't got a farthing; but never mind, old dad, I've had enough learning to make my way. Love to the old woman.

"Yours, affectionately,
"FRANK."

A little in contradiction with his statement; still not much more than it is with that of many persons: "written laws" are not always synonymous with "unwritten." Poor Mr. Fowle read the letter aloud, while Mrs. Fowle was sewing over a rushlight. "Foolish boy, what is he doing?"

"Oh, yes, leave; ay, I should think so," said Dobbs. "Governor doesn't care a snaffle where I am,—saddle me, if he does! Leave? ay!"

"DEAR GOVERNOR,—I'll leave this place. Can't stay: never mind why. Send Black Nancy to fetch me on Thursday next. Love to all.

"Your dutiful

"DICK."

"P.S. I say, don't forget to send the new snaffle, I want to try it: it's a patent."

"What's the fellow at next?" said Mr. Dobbs, as dressed in his pink and top-boots, he was breakfasting, with his horse waiting at the door for hunting. "Come away. And want Black Nancy! likely enough he does. I'll do nothing more for the fellow—see if I will! Black Nancy! I dare say he does. Tell him if he dares to come, I'll give him snaffle and curb too, in a way he won't like."

"Dear me," whined Wimpkins. "Ah, well! no, it clearly will not do to remain. Dear! there's no telling how such a youth as Dance might corrupt the most innocent among us. Yes, I am sure I quite feel, quite, with the excellent judgment expressed by Talbot, that—that—in short, leaving—leaving is the only alternative. Yes, I will write." And he did, thus:

"DEAREST MOTHER,—I trust this letter will not incommode you. We think it better to leave Mr. Dobson's academy. Things are not as they were, nor as they should be at all. I think of returning to the maternal roof, and shall much enjoy a residence at home for a short time. In fact, I have long felt that female society is needed to give that soft finish to the character, which without it is so harsh. My dear sisters and their governess, and the charming Miss Brunels, who, I hear, are your neighbours, will just do this for me. Expect me on Friday. Respects to my father.

"Your affectionate child.

"Please send the britska, as I shall have several packages."

"Female society! female nonsense!" said Mr. Wimpkins, throwing down the *Times*, as Mrs. Wimpkins read her darling's letter. "The governess! why, the boy's mad; she's six-and-forty. Miss Brunels! who on earth? Why, does he mean the old maids next door? Come on Friday, eh! I say, tell the fellow—for I have not the patience to write,—tell him that if he dares to come with his packages here, I'll—britska! likely enough; better send the governess and the Miss Brunels in it. I say. tell him —"

"My dear, do be pacified a moment: I will write," said the maternity. And Mr. Wimpkins grumblingly resumed the *Times*.

"MY DARLING PET,—Mr. W. will not hear of it. My pet, do not be distressed: you know *him*, I will take him in a good humour, and you shall soon leave,—*that* you shall. Don't worry, my duck.

"Your affectionate and idolising mother,
"DOROTHEA W."

"Well, I quite feel with Talbot; but I can't go home, that's certain; I can't bother the governor; I can't put him to any more expense. But I'll make a proposal, and leave it to him." So spoke Brooke, and he wrote:

"DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER,—I'm tired of this place: what's the use of Ovid to me? I don't want to put you to difficulty; so, if I may leave, I'll join the army at once without a commission. Let me hear.

"Your affectionate and dutiful son.

"P.S. I shouldn't mind entering the Guards as a private."

"Well, I can't quite see my way to leaving. I want to get through that Herodotus; and old Dobson, with all his oddities, is up with his Herodotus," said Pulteney. "No, I can't leave."

"You ass!" said Brooke! "fancy at such a moment thinking of Herodotus."

"I thank you," said Pulteney, keeping his face down towards the table, as he still followed the motions of the same little animal as before over the surface. But Pulteney wrote:

"DEAR SIR,—I think it may be as well for me to be thinking of leaving this school. I had thought, with your permission, of going in for the Baliol this next Easter. Mr. Dobson thinks I am ready, at least to try; and a trial, even with failure, does good.

"Your very affectionate and grateful son,
"E. PULTENEY."

"Dear fellow," said Mr. Pulteney, who was a tall, grey-haired, gentlemanly clergyman in Suffolk, rising from the breakfast-table, and going to the window to look at the church-clock, which peered through the fir-trees.

"He is indeed," echoed Mrs. Pulteney, in an under sigh, as she threw herself back in her chair to gain more light for her worsted-work.

Such is a sketch of some of the modes of reception of Talbot's proposition.

But it all ended in smoke; for though they were heroically and devotedly determined on self-sacrifice, events were in the wind which made it needless.

The meeting was broken up; and Talbot, leaving the room, beckoned to Basil: "Come along, old fellow; come and walk."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LEE.

BASIL sprung up, and the two friends started off on a walk. It was that day that Dance and his party had taken Willie down to the Lee. The evening was wild and stormy; the clouds scudded quickly along over the

sky, thin and fleecy, now and then opening a chasm in which was seen the silver crescent of the moon clear and keen as crystal in the sky; the wind howled far off in long anxious wailings; the leafless willow shuddered at the sound; the river flowed on with a gurgling noise from its swollen waters; while the shout of the ploughboy returning from work broke the solitude of the hour.

"Where's your friend Willie?" said Talbot. "I can't be quite easy, for I think there is some mischief brewing."

"Why?" said Basil, anxiously.

"Why, I overheard something I didn't like," said Talbot.

"Did you?" said Basil, rather quickly.

"Yes," said Talbot, hesitatingly, and looking up into the wild evening sky; "yes; and I heard something more at Larken's just now: it's that that makes me take the walk. They are gone this way; and I feel sure there's some mischief. See here, where they have been; here are marks of their footsteps."

The two friends continued to walk on quickly and anxiously. Talbot had given to Basil's mind a feeling of apprehension.

They went in the direction of the Lee, as if intuitively. At every step the evening grew darker and darker, and the loud rushing sound of the river came out more fully and distinctly before them.

"There are sounds of voices," said Basil.

"Yes," said Talbot, looking round; but not satisfying Basil's mind as to the cause of his great alarm and apprehension.

At that moment the sound of voices was heard more loudly, now low and now distinct above the moanings of the wind and the sobbings of the water.

But the shades of evening were so thick that they could scarcely see any thing before them.

"There they go!" shouted Talbot. "I have them: I am so glad!"

"Why, why?" asked Basil. "What makes you so anxious? I don't understand you."

"Never mind, never mind," said Talbot: "follow me, that's all."

He had hardly spoken these words, when a loud, long, piercing scream broke upon their ears; so long, so piercing as to rivet them both for a moment to the earth with pale lips and beating hearts. The scream died away, and the wind came up moaning along to carry off its last faint echoes; then there was a plunge, a heavy plunge, which sounded far above the wail of the Lee, and another scream, faint and lower than the last, then the murmur of many voices following afar off.

They stood a quarter of a minute, not more, and Basil bounded from the spot where he stood; he cleared the hedge and was far away before Talbot had collected himself enough to follow.

"Stay, Basil, stay a moment!" he cried out. But not a moment could Basil stay; he was gone on a high mission, one of life and death, that he knew.

"Oh, save me! save me! O my God, save me!" wildly shrieked the voice of little Willie, as he was borne rapidly along the surface of the river towards the mill-stream.

"Oh, don't! pray don't!" shrieked the terrified child, as Dance swore he should be thrown into the water to undo the net, which had caught in some reeds.

"Why, you little fool, who is going to hurt you? You're youngest here, and you'll float if you are out of your depth; besides, it's the duty of the big fellows to teach the young ones to swim." And he and Stocker proceeded to lift Willie up to throw him into the rapid Lee, which under the fickle winter moon glimmered and darkened, frowning and smiling at the sky.

Never did that Lee look so dreadful to Willie as in that one minute of agony; never did those pollard willows look so black and angry, shaking their tall, upright, leafless boughs in the wind, like fingers shaking at the wicked.

"I shall be drowned! I shall be drowned! I know I shall! Oh, pray don't, I can't swim! O Ella! O my mother, my own mother! can't you hear Willie cry?" was the exceeding bitter cry of the agonised boy.

"It's really fun to hear him," said Dance; "let's prolong the scene."

The other boys stood round with very varied feelings. Some felt burning with rage, but were ashamed to speak; some laughed; some stared; some kept their hands in their pockets, and chucked buttons up and down inside them, and fished deeply for more, not knowing they did it in their excitement.

It looked very wild and gloomy; the dull, fitful winter afternoon, the hollow sobs of the wind, which came choking down the fields, the brown, wet, reedy fields: the fitful gleams of the half-moon, which peered out as the clouds shot over it, made the scene more sad and sombre.

"O my God! will not you help a little boy, a poor little orphan boy?" cried Willie.

Yes, Willie, yes, He will! He is near you, close by; but sometimes He sends His little ones, His own beloved ones, through a moment of agony, to bring them out into everlasting joy. Stay a moment, Willie—a little, little moment, Willie—till this tyranny be overpast. One more long, loud cry, exceeding bitter—one heavy plunge, one upshoot of troubled waters, and then on rolled the worried Lee, gurgling and crying and rushing as before; the figures stood on the bank, their heads were stooping forward; and one more thing—a black spot, a boy's head—went shooting on in the middle of the stream, and a hand which was every now and then thrust up, then a choking cry, and then the black speck went down, and the Lee grumbled on as before, with nothing on it; and then that head came up again, as it shot so quickly now round this bough of an old reaching willow and now round that—now round this jutting bank and that; and the very willow-boughs, tall and stiff as they were, stooped down in the wind to look at the shooting head; but on it went.

A deep, dead, breathless silence sunk on the gazing party on the bank; no one spoke even one word; none breathed. Dance choked a little, as if something rose up in his throat; Stocker leant eagerly forward; other boys looked, and stared, and gasped; but no one spoke.

"I say, old fellow—eh?" said Stocker.

"Eh, eh?" said Dance; "I say, we've done it! What shall—"

The break of the silence broke up a fountain of voices.

"It's a shame! a beast of a shame! Dance, you're a beast—a beast of a bully! I'd kill you, I'd kill you, you beast!" said one boy, pale with rage, and doubling his fist in Dance's face. But the tyrant was quiet; he returned no answer, no return to the loaded insults.

Poor dear Dance! he had done his best, done his duty. He was a big fellow at school, and he had tried to make a little fellow hardy and manly; why blame him? Parents, why blame him? You said you wished your child to be inured and hardened; and you joked with the big fellows that day at dinner in the holidays about bullying being what ought to be; then why blame Dance, poor dear fellow? Shame on you, parents and masters! you connived at it, and you approved of it.

"He'll shoot down the mill-stream!" gasped Dance in agony. "He'll be drowned!" said the bully in a voice tremulous with terror, and looking pale as moonlight.

"Jump in yourself and save him," cried a number of voices.

"I daren't," said Dance, in a low choking voice.

"You can swim; jump in," again said the voice, while some one pushed him behind.

"Oh, don't, don't, there's a good fellow!" said Dance, in a deep agonised tone. "I say, Stocker, jump in, do, there's a good fellow!" said he.

"The mill-stream!" That word shot horror round the party; the rushing, impetuous, headlong mill-stream, that must be certain death! Two figures appeared in the next field; it took but a moment to see and know whose they were. The cry of "Talbot!" "Basil!" passed quickly from lip to lip; and Dance gazed with a choking delight on the forms which at any other time he had hated to see. A few moments more of agony and suspense, and the two figures were on the bank.

"Stop, Basil, one moment," said Talbot, "one moment!" while the generous youth tried to delay his friend, that he might make the now all-but fatal plunge.

But Basil had thrown off his jacket and waistcoat; and before Talbot could hinder him, Basil's figure leapt high above the reedy bank. There was a heavy plunge, a dash of water in the moonlight, and nothing was seen.

All now rushed to where Talbot still stood watching the movements; another moment, and Basil's head appeared again. He saw Willie, the dark spot that still floated on the very edge of the mill-pond. Every eye was fixed in agony on Basil's figure, as with a desperate stroke the noble boy neared his friend.

"He'll have him! he's getting close, quite close! Thank God, he is near him! Oh, but the mill-pond! See, see, Willie's close, close to the mill-pond! Oh!" cried three or four voices together.

White as the moonlight on the grass stood Dance with his teeth chattering, and his hands in his pockets; but no one seemed to know or care that he was there.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" rang from the whole band; "he has him!"

Basil had made one more stroke, and Willie's long wet hair was in his hand; but the child, however far gone, was still enough himself to fling his arm in agony round his preserver; and with that fatal energy which belongs to the drowning, he clung so close to him, that both sunk beneath the stream; and on and angrily rolled and scolded the troubled Lee, as if it complained to the moon that its evening merry-making was disturbed. The two were in the outer rim of the mill-stream and all must be lost, when through the gazing circle a sudden chasm was made, and Talbot sprang from the bank and dashed headlong into the stream.

"Oh, he'll be drowned! they'll all be lost! No; stop—see, see; he swims, he reaches them; they're whirling round in the water! Talbot has them—has them both; and he is swimming back with his load!"

And he did; on he came. Basil, whose strength was almost spent, hung on his arm, and on his own arm he bore Willie, poor Willie! his head hung back over his shoulder, and his hair trailed long and wet into the stream. His face was quite white, pale as wax, and the moon shone on his throat which was apparent as his

head hung back like death. O Talbot! will you bring them safely? Another moment, and he stretched out his hand to those on the bank. Many grasped it, and Talbot stood on the bank; and on the grass lay Basil, exhausted, faint, and gasping with his head leaning on the breast of another boy, who chafed his hands and rubbed his temples: and on the ground lay Willie, quite quiet. His hair, long and wet, lay out on the grass; his face, white as the rose that crowned his mother's brow, smiled under the moon. One hand lay on his breast and the other on the grass; both were white as snow; and the moon looked down from the clouds so peacefully and sweetly at him, while the clouds made a large chasm that the moon might look a long time. Old moon! you look down on many things. You look down on many boys' schools and big boys' bullyings, old white moon! but you never blush. Or are you pale with anger? Which? Yes, shine peacefully now on that quiet little one! Dear Willie! are your troubles over? Little trembler! are you gone home, Willie?

Talbot knelt by his side and held the cold hand in his bosom; Basil had crept up to him, and laid the heavy head on his breast. The lips were parted with a smile, but quite white. On every face horror was painted and on some terror. There was only one face where there was none, and that was Willie's: *there* was peace. And is your journey taken, little sufferer? Have you crossed the river, the last, cold, dark river, whose waters are colder than even those of that angry Lee; have you crossed it, as you dreamt you would do the other night? Have you crossed the Jordan, and gone where Dance hinders you no more? Have you seen the King in His beauty, Willie? Is the cage empty, or are you to wake again? Wait a little longer before you go, another day. Is it till to-morrow? and then are you to go across the water where JESUS had gone before, bearing the ark of the covenant? "And Joshua came to Jordan, and lodged there before they crossed over, and said, Sanctify yourselves for *to-morrow*, and the LORD will do wonders among you."

CHAPTER IX.

ELLA.

THERE was a small town on the cliffs by the sea-side, and four or five little houses in a street at the end of which were three flights of steps leading from the cliffs to the beach. It was a wide, bright, distant, open sea. There was one large, old-fashioned brick house, up an avenue of dusty elms, scorched and withered by the sea-breeze. The house had three rows of windows, nine in a row, with three stacks of chimney-pots; and through the windows the inhabitants could see the sea, which winked and frowned at them in sunshine and shower: at the gate of the house was a broad board with the word "Academy" on it. It was a girls' school kept on reasonable terms, by three maiden sisters, the Miss Gamps. It was well conducted, and, as they said, *happy*, but no one could tell, for no one ever went inside, and outside the girls were always flanked by the Miss Gamps.

The three Miss Gamps were daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Gamp, who had retired from trade in Pimlico and had lived in Scarborough. Mr. Gamp was no scholar, but had a passion for ancient history; some said because he had only one book in his possession—that was Goldsmith's "History of Rome." His eldest daughter and head of the school, was named Caligula: she was named Caligula because, as report went, the evening before she was born Mr. Gamp read the chapter about Caligula, and the name so haunted Mrs. Gamp, that she insisted on its being given to her daughter; and Mr. Gamp said, because it ended in an *a*, he knew enough and not too much of grammar to feel certain it must be a feminine name. When afterwards people laughed at him he got so annoyed, that he declared he would, out of spite to Mrs. Gamp, name the next daughter Pompey, which he did; and Miss Pompey Gamp was brought up and educated. The third daughter, by way of a reaction from the sublime names of the others, sunk into the bathos of Susan. These were their three and only children. Mr. and Mrs.

Gamp died, and left between two and three thousand pounds apiece.

The three ladies were in the middle age of life, unmarried, and determined to keep a school. Miss Caligula was the head : she was tall, had a good figure, a hard face, high cheek-bones, a fixed smile, and dressed in lavender merino made high up with a tuck round the throat ; a bunch of keys hung at her side ; her hair was fixed, neat, and stiff as iron shavings on either side of her head. Her department was to receive friends, to take the money, pay the bills, and keep the establishment. She was a strict economist, and managed admirably. She was the terror of every tradesman. No one was ever known even to dream of cheating her. She always discouraged beggars and the poor ; and she did so with such firm and admirable precision, that she never but once was known, or knew herself, to have yielded to the temptation of relieving the poor.

" I disapprove of poverty, my dear. My father left me two thousand pounds ; and poverty, in my opinion, is the result of vice. The drunkard impoverishes both wife and child, therefore poverty is the result of vice." Such was the laconic and logical aphorism of Miss Gamp, well known to many. Once she did yield. She was passing over a down, and was pressed hard by an Irish begging-woman, whose loud manner so *terrified*, as *some* said—so *touched* her, as *she* said—that in her alarm, as *some* said—in her generosity, as *she* said—she flung her half-a-crown, crying, " Begone, good woman ! begone ! " When she got home she relented at what she had done, lest the beggar might get drunk ; and she sent Griffin, her own maid, to tell the beggar it was a mistake that Miss Gamp had made, and to beg that she would send the half-crown back again : but, strangely enough, the beggar, though found, could not understand the force of the argument, and did not return the half-crown, and I believe she never has yet, and never will till she feels the force of the argument, though, of course, she keeps it by her unspent while the case pends. But, be this as it may, Miss Caligula ever after held the poor in greater abhorrence. " They are all a wicked, dishonest, grasping race : I *never* will encourage them."

Miss Pompey was short and square; just like Miss Caligula in face, only she was freckled; and was dressed exactly like her, save that, in the place of the keys, she wore a pencil, knife, pair of compasses, and a steel pen. She was chief teacher in the school, always *spoke* to the young ladies, and had nothing to do with accounts.

Miss Susan did the dirty work; had to do with servants, girls' clothes, and went on journeys; rather good-looking; dressed just like the others, in lavender merino and tuckers. All three wore puce satin, trimmed with black lace, on Sundays. Susan, in place of keys, wore a pair of scissors, a small washing-book, and a yard measure.

Such were the three Miss Gamps. They were all together in the small parlour, the glitter of whose bright polished mahogany shone brighter than any in the neighbourhood.

"Pompey, my love," said Miss Caligula, going on writing at her escritoire, and looking straight down on her book, like a nymph looking after Hylas in the pond,—*"Pompey, my love, I regret to say this letter contains bad news."*

"Dear me!" said Pompey, who stood airing herself at the fire with her face towards it; and, while she looked up at the picture above the mantelpiece, she smoothed down her apron with her fingers."

"Yes, it is from Mr. Dobson, saying that the orphan Ella's brother is dying, probably dead," said she, going on writing most beautifully and neatly.

"Dear! dead! The orphan will have his share, then. There is no other, I think!"

"That's just what I was thinking of," said Miss Caligula, going on writing.

"So thoughtful always," said Pompey on the rug.

"She will pay more then, and sleep in No. 5, and have more to pay for washing," said Susan walking from the window, where she had been sitting looking for excitement among the withered elms; but none came.

"My dear! he is not dead yet, but only there are hopes of it," said Pompey.

"No—that's all," said Miss Caligula, going on writing; "but now the orphan should be apprised of it, and she

must go, I suppose, to see her brother. Let me see. Susan, my love, you will go with her in the fly; and mind she must see her brother and return the next day. She must in no case stay over the funeral, however soon. Of course, so excellent a manager as Mr. Dobson will take care to keep the corpse as short a time as possible, especially when there are no friends to come forward."

"But I thought he was not dead yet," said Miss Pompey.

"No; only hopes of it, my love," said Miss Caligula, calmly.

"Tell Miss Ella to come," said Miss Gamp with dignity to the maid who answered the bell. "Let me see, my dear: the fly will cost eighteen shillings—eighteen shillings, my dear."

"And sixpence," said Susan; whether for rhythm's sake or truth's sake, I don't know.

"Yes, and sixpence: that's right—that's accurate—and sixpence halfpenny," said Miss Caligula, looking at her account-book; "for I see there's a turnpike."

But the door opened, and Ella entered—Ella, Willie's sister: that dear name he had often said to himself in the little wood and whom he always prayed for; Ella he so often talked of to Basil—dear little Ella, who had bound those white roses with him round their mother's head in the garden the day before she died. Ella! oh, little orphan! do you love Willie as he loves you?

She was a young child, about ten years old. Her eyes were of the palest blue, the lashes which fringed them were long and soft; her hair was light and golden and hung down in ringlets on her neck; her brow was clear and open and when she smiled, her face lit up all over, like as when a sunbeam lights up a flower within its coloured bell. She was very lovely and her form was very slender. She looked unlikely to live long; there was a sadness over her sweet face, which told that she had early known trouble. She did love Willie; the same hymns, the same prayers he said, she said too, every day. She loved him as her dear, only brother, and longed for the day—only she did not know when it would come—when she should keep his house. She used to think of him so

long, when she stood looking out at that wide sea and watched the little golden boats, and wondered where they went to—what lovely land there could be beyond! When would Willie and she be free, and take a long, long journey over the waves?

“Dear Willie! he and I were with our own dear mamma when we bound the white roses on her head. I wonder if he has got that little portrait of her still.” She always heard from Willie every week. He wrote only two days ago:—

“DEAR, DEAR LITTLE ELLA,—My own, own pretty sister! there’s such a nice boy here; he lets me talk about you, Ella, and our mamma. His name is Basil, and I sleep in his room. Nelly, dear, don’t you long to see me? I long to see you. We shall, I think, in six months; but that’s a long time—isn’t it? Never mind, we can love each other, and sing ‘Jerusalem, my happy home,’ together; and our mamma sees us both—doesn’t she, Ella?—like the moon does. I always think of that when I see the moon. Don’t fret, dear; Talbot’s much kinder since the new boy came. Dance is very unkind; he broke dear mamma’s portrait: never mind, Ella. Don’t fret, Ella, I have got the face left, and that’s what we love, is it not? We’ll live together some day, Nelly, and you shall keep my house, and we’ll have such talks. I hope JESUS CHRIST will love us and take care of you, dear Ella, and take us one day to our mamma in heaven. Good-bye, dear Ella; I love you so much.

“Your own

“WILLIE.”

The letter had come two days before, and Ella took it to bed with her and cried herself to sleep, after she had looked at the far-off sea under the moon. Strange old moon! which looks down on the sleeping sister and the drowning brother, and does not tell either of the other.

Ella was in mourning—very plain, but deep—for her mother. The door shut, and the little figure stood inside.

“Ella,” said Miss Gamp, looking off her desk, “you were sent for.” And Miss Caligula looked at Pompey, who always *spoke* to the young ladies.

"My dear, it is my painful duty to tell you that your brother is dead, and—"

"No, not dead, my dear; only hopes of it," interrupted Miss Caligula; "but not likely to live, and you must go and see him; but on no account—"

"What? brother Willie!" said the little girl, with a cry of agony which would have wrung the hardest heart, while her large full eyes opened wide in terror. She spoke as if she had another brother, but Willie was her all. "What! Willie—my Willie—dying? O, Willie! you said you'd come and see me. O, Willie! my brother!" and down her face the tears coursed rapidly.

"Now, my dear," said Miss Caligula, "this will not do; this is giving way. We should check these feelings while young. It is not much blame to you, but it is to be checked. We must dry those tears, and we must prepare for the journey. Miss Susan will go with you in the fly, and you will have one day with your brother, if he is not deceased; but if he should be, or if his demise should take place while you are there, you are on no account to stay for the funeral."

"The funeral!" cried the trembling little girl; "the funeral! Whose funeral? Another funeral? I have been at mamma's funeral just now. *Willie is not dead!*" The last words she said with so much anguish, that it almost touched Miss Susan, who was always more tender than the other two.

"You may go," said Miss Caligula, with touching and sympathising dignity; "you may go." But Ella did not move. She looked up and gazed deeply on the lady's face, as if her thoughts had wandered; a third time the permission was repeated before Ella quite took it in; and then she left the room like one who did not know whither she went.

The window of Ella's chamber caught a far off view of the great distant sea. She often stood and saw the broad band of white moonlight which streamed over its tumultuous and boundless expanse, and would watch the little dark specks of fishing-boats which came gliding by, till crossing the band of living light they became themselves like tiny reefs of gilded snow; and she would long to be in one of them with Willie, and sail away where

they would. She used to stand and hear the distant plunge of the waves as they tumbled sleepily on the shore; and then came the roar of the angry shingle at being so suddenly and unexpectedly struck; and she listened and listened, and wondered if ever she and Willie would play together on the golden sand, and watch the billows on the angry stones and the mussel-shells on the rocks. Willie!—yes, Willie was her one idea of love, and life, and freedom, and joy, and hope; she had no other. She was a sisterless orphan, and he was her only brother. Life was sad enough here: still there was the future—the bright, boundless, possible future—and how bright that was to a child of even ten years old! She got so to love that old, wide, soft sea out of her window, that she often wondered why it said in the Bible, “There shall be no more sea;” for she loved the sea. “O Willie! my Willie! and will you die, and shall I be all alone? O my mamma! my own, my beautiful mamma! why did you not take me with you? And Willie will see you and be with you, and I shall be all alone, left behind!”

As she leant her head against the window, which stood open towards the old sea, and the door was locked, and the moon shone in on the white bed and little Ella's long curls and sweet face, the hot tears ran down one by one on the window-sill. “Willie! Willie!” cried the little girl; and when she stopped, the sea in the distance seemed to sound mournfully and kindly, as if it sung echoes of comfort to the little sorrower—(how often Nature is the comforter of man!)—and a little, tiny, snowy sail crossed the moonbeam without a sound. Oh, it looked so lovely! it looked like a spirit going home. Ella was a loving little girl. She cried herself to sleep after she had prayed her evening prayer, and sung in a quiet under-tone, as she always did, with her hands folded before her, at the side of her bed:

“Jerusalem, my happy home,
Name ever dear to me!
When shall my sorrows have an end
In joy, and peace, and thee?”

The next morning she was to start—to start on her

sad journey. Was it to see Willie die, or dead? The fly was round at nine. A change had been made: Miss Caligula was going with her, instead of Miss Susan; for she remembered she wanted to do some shopping in the town near Mr. Dobson's, and to invest some money in the bank there. The change was not pleasant to poor Ella, for Miss Susan was clearly the kindest of the three; but she could not help herself. Ella still wore mourning for her mother; and her dark plain dress and bonnet set off more sweetly and beautifully still the loveliness of her childlike face. She followed Miss Gamp's tall, gaunt figure into the carriage, and the door closed. Miss Caligula perseveringly looked out of the window knitting her brows, and seemed abstracted. She wore a black straw bonnet with purple ribbons, a thin black silk cloak, and a muff. She was always plain and simple. She sat rather forward, and little Ella only saw where the gap was left between the bonnet and the cloak which the little black silk handkerchief did not wholly hide. She tried to nestle herself in the corner of the carriage to think of Willie; she did so in the hope that Miss Gamp would not speak.

"Child, keep still," said Miss Caligula after the first half-hour.

Ella did not know she had moved. A few more minutes passed.

"Now, remember, my dear, whatever happens, we return to-morrow."

"Yes, ma'am," said Ella, sadly.

"But I hope we may find your brother better, though, from the account, I do not expect it."

"Willie will go to my mamma; don't you think so, ma'am?" said Ella, getting weary of silence and longing for sympathy.

"Doubtless," said the governess, still looking out of window. "The excellent sermons at home tell us that we possess an invisible and undying element."

Ella did not understand this; but she caught the word "undying," and said, "Yes, he will live for ever in heaven, dear Willie! Do you not think so, ma'am?"

"Without doubt, there is a place where the undying soul will live; indeed, the same sermons confirm the im-

pression," said the lady. But Ella still wandered on amid her own simple thoughts.

"I wonder if I shall know Willie and my mamma in heaven!"—but here she broke down; and the tears, too long held back, rolled down her cheek.

"Pray be disciplined, my dear," said Miss Gamp, angrily; this is indeed childish." And poor Ella, chid and reproved, crept into her corner, and, half sleeping, dreamt of the lady with the white flowers and Willie playing with her by the great wide sea. The poor orphan had sunk into a deep sleep, when towards dark the chaise drew up at the door of Mr. Dobson's academy, the house where Willie lived.

CHAPTER X.

GOING HOME.

THEY took him home to Mr. Dobson's on a shutter, which they got from the mill. Talbot and some of the elder boys carried him, Basil walked by his side and tried to steady the shutter, and the others followed behind. Dance skulked with his hands in his pockets under the hedge, thoroughly frightened and ashamed. The boys were silent and awestruck, even the boldest: boyhood, at its worst, has many high and generous feelings and will acknowledge being in the wrong by a high-minded silence, even where a false reserve prevents the confession of it.

The moon was clearly out now and the clouds had scudded away to form a vast bank over the horizon, so that the moon shone softly on the angry foaming Lee and the pollard willows on its banks; and it shone on the mill-stream, which whirled round and round as if it knew something had been the matter; and it shone on the great wide sea at which Ella looked as she gazed out of window; and it shone on Willie, Willie's quiet white face, who lay fast asleep (or dead, which?) on the shutter; and his

head rolled slowly backwards and forwards, now to this side, now to that, as his long, wet hair streamed over its edge, and his white hand hung down over one side, hitting with its chilly fingers Basil's forehead; it swung backwards and forwards, and the other hand lay quiet on his breast, as if it guarded the little portrait which he always kept there. No one spoke, but each walked quickly; and many who looked at the nodding head turned away frightened, for they thought he was dead. But he was not dead—no, Willie, not yet; you will go home presently, not yet; you are on the banks of Jordan, just going to step in, but you must say good-bye to Ella, take her last message to her own mother, whom you are going to see. Yes, Willie, you must wait and kiss little Ella once more, for she does so love you; and then you may go, poor struggler, in perfect peace to your happy home, where Dance cannot follow.

Willie lay on his bed, his small bed in Basil's room; the clean white counterpane looked whiter than ever. There was a table in the room and a candle on it, and three or four bottles of medicine, and two oranges and a fig in a plate, and a biscuit; and there was the smell of ether in the room: it was night, and all the house was quiet like a grave. No one made a noise, and on his pillow lay the little pilgrim; he was asleep, and his face was white, very white, and his lips as pale as death, and his hand was on the portrait, and he breathed heavily. The Bible lay open on his chest and Basil sat at the end of the bed on a chair, with his chin on his hand, gazing long and quietly in Willie's face, and watching him without a sound or movement. The room was quite still, except for the little boy's breathing; something fell downstairs, and Willie started and moved round; then with a moan turned his head and face back again, and opened his eyes and gazed earnestly at the candle, then shut them, and then opened them again.

"Mamma," said he, with a sigh, "I'm coming," and he shut his eyes again. "I'm coming, I'm coming; Ella and I have been picking the white roses, dear, quite down the shrubbery-walk, that's why we're so long. But

I'm coming, mamma, directly; don't look so pale, mamma. Never mind if the water is cold, I can pull you out—I and Basil: come, come quick; here's Dance: Dance is coming!" and Willie started up on his pillow, and stared round.

"Well, Willie," said Basil, gently, without moving; "it's only I; don't be frightened."

"Oh, dear!" said the little boy; "I am going to my mamma: Jesus will take me home—I have had such a beautiful dream about Him. I thought I was sinking into a deep, cold river, and He came walking along, and put out His hand and I caught it and was quite safe: it was beautiful, Basil."

"Was it?" said Basil.

"Yes."

"He will save you, Willie."

"Why do you say so?"

"Because you have been so good and loved Him so, Willie."

"Ah, no, Basil; 'we love Him because He first loved us.' It is all of His love that He saves me. I was thinking before I fell asleep of the many unkind things I have said and done about Dance and others, and many, many more things besides. I must speak to Dance before I die," said he.

"Yes, that you shall," said Basil.

"Just one word to say I quite, quite forgive him, 'even as GOD, for CHRIST's sake, hath forgiven me,'" said he, musingly. "But, Basil, there is one thing—I should so like to see Ella, dear little Ella."

"She is coming," said Basil; "Mr. Dobson has sent for her."

"Oh," cried the little boy, rising up and clasping his hands together, "oh, then, is Ella coming—my little Ella?"

"Yes," said Basil, "I think she will be here by to-morrow night."

"Basil, I am sorry to leave you," continued the boy, "very sorry,—you have been so kind to me; but I have been a great trouble, and often was in your way; but you have so helped me to love God, by letting me talk to

you, and by hearing me my hymns. Oh, I am so glad I have tried to do what dear mamma told me before she went away ; read, Basil, please," said the little sufferer, as he turned his face to the wall.

Basil read the last verses of the eleventh chapter of S. Matthew.

"Thank you, Basil ; so beautiful those are, my mamma said them often before she died ; what does 'yoke' mean, Basil ? I never quite knew."

"It means that we must bend under His blessed law, and make our wills give way to it."

"Oh, yes ; but I always loved to do what He told me ; I think so at least."

"Did you, Willie ?" said Basil, looking at him earnestly as he wondered at such a state of mind.

"I think so, Basil," said he, turning round. "I am sure I wish to ; do ask me the hardest thing you can think of for me to do, and let me see if I could do it."

"Could you quite love and forgive Dance ?" said Basil.

"Oh, yes," said the little fellow, his eyes brightening up as he spoke ; "oh, yes, that I could, and do, and will. Will Dance come and see me ?"

"Yes, Willie, but not now. Can you bear to die so young, without seeing more of the world ?" said Basil, letting the Bible drop on the bed, as he became interested in his questions with which all the while he was secretly and inwardly testing himself.

"Seeing more of the world ?" said Willie. "Yes ; why, I am going to live with Jesus, and my mamma is there ; that's more like home than this. Then there's Ella, to be sure," said he, hesitating, and lying back again.

"Could you bear never seeing Ella again ?"

Willie sighed deeply. "Dear Ella ! I should so much like to see her. That would be hard ; but you know, Basil," said he after a pause, "God will help me to bear any thing, *any thing*, and He will help me to bear that too."

"Yes, Willie," said Basil, looking in admiration, "He will indeed."

Willie sighed. "Go on, Basil, please; ask me some more questions."

"If God made you well and took Ella, could you bear to go on here and be alone in the world and kicked about, as you are here at Mr. Dobson's?"

"Take Ella?" said Willie. "What, she go to my mamma, and I wait awhile? it would be hard, would it not, Basil?—yes, oh, yes, I would try, with God's help. Yes, I think I could; I do so want to do what He tells me and to go to heaven;—yes, go on."

"What do you think has been the chief fault of your life, Willie?"

"Oh, my temper," said he, "that's one; I am so often cross and unkind; often so to you, Basil, am I not?"

"Never mind, dear Willie, now," said Basil; "if you get well, do you think you could do any thing to put down your temper?"

"Oh, yes," said he, joining his hands together, "that I could, any thing."

"Dear Willie!" said Basil, placing his hand on his face, with a deep sigh.

"Don't sigh so, Basil dear," said his little friend.

But Basil sighed because he felt how hard it would be for him to go through such questions and to answer as Willie did; the soil to which he clung held so far more tightly than Willie's did the cords of his tabernacle. "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." But Willie was tired and exhausted with the conversation and he needed rest.

He was sinking quickly: the sudden effect of the cold river, the long immersion in the water on his naturally delicate frame, had brought on inflammation of the lungs, and though it was subsiding, consumption of the most rapid nature had taken its place; the accident had only happened four days before, yet he was now dying, dying, going home, lingering a little while on the Jordan before he crossed, waiting to see Ella, and she was on her way. Basil never left him. God was working wonders. Talbot too was preparing for his eternal future. How often a trifle, the example or suffering of a child, is the warm ray

of sunshine which ripens a hundred trees with the fruit of the heavenly harvest.

"How's Willie?" was the constant question through the schoolroom each morning and noon. A singular stillness reigned through the house. All seemed to feel solemnised and terror-struck at the dreadful incident. Dance and his friends were at a sad discount: they skulked from corner to corner like beaten hounds, and no one spoke to them.

"Dance, Willie wants to speak to you," said Talbot entering the school-room. Dance started as if struck by a bullet; he was sitting in a corner of the room with a slate in his hand; all eyes turned towards him; it sounded like a voice from eternity calling him. Talbot had to repeat it before Dance spoke.

"I had rather not," said he with a trembling voice; "thank you, I had rather not."

"You *must* come," said Talbot; "Willie wants to speak to you, and he may not be refused. Do you know he is dying?"

The last word crashed like the thunder of tempest on Dance's ear. Dying! and was he then a murderer? His teeth chattered, and he pressed his wet, cold, clammy hand on his slate, and kept on looking down.

"Go, go!" cried many voices in the room; "Dance, you must go." None spoke unkindly, for all pitied the bully now.

He resisted no one: he rose and followed Talbot out of the room. They went upstairs and at the top of the staircase the passage turned off, at the end of which was Willie's door; it stood partly open, and the broad yellow strip of candle-light shone between the edge of the open door and the wall, and there was a shadow just visible on the wall inside, a shadow of some one sitting, and little low sounds of some one speaking in a long low tone, as people talk in dreams, and there was a smell of camphor which crept down the passage. Dance started and stopped; his finger was on his lip; he had shunned the passage since Willie's illness.

"I can't go any further," said he; "indeed, Talbot, I

can't." Talbot turned and looked with compassion on the poor wretch.

"You must come, Dance; it is all you can do now for poor Willie." The kind voice, the persuasive argument told, and Dance moved.

"Come with me in here," said Talbot, leading the way into his own study. Dance was glad of even a momentary delay, and he followed. Talbot sat down; he had to write a note, and was himself not sorry to delay the trying scene, which to one of Talbot's natural reserve was doubly painful. Dance stood near the door, and Talbot's face was bent down over his paper.

"I think," said Dance, "please, Talbot, I think I had better not go in."

"You must, indeed you must, Dance," said Talbot, sadly, but not looking up.

"Does he look very dreadful?" said Dance; "white and pale; the boys say he does; I never saw any one dead," and he trembled.

"Willie is not dead yet," said Talbot, laying down his pen and looking up.

"Do you think he will die while I am in the room?"

"No, I think not," said Talbot.

"Will he, will he curse me, do you think? the boys say if a person curses you when he is dying, it comes true."

"Curse you! No, Dance, he wants to forgive you, to bless you," and Talbot's voice quivered with emotion.

"Forgive *me*! bless *me*!" said Dance; "Willie be kind to *me*! why, I killed him!" and he sank back against the door.

"He does not mind dying," said Talbot.

"Not mind dying!" gasped the other; "I should."

"Yes, because you are not ready, he is; he will go to heaven."

"And does he wish to go there?" said the bully.

"Dance," said Talbot, looking at him earnestly, "do you know that wretched bird in the cage in your room, whose wings you cut off, and one of its feet?"

"Yes," said Dance; "why do you speak of that now, Talbot?"

"I don't speak of it to pain you, Dance; but I want to ask you a question."

There was a wretched little skylark which Dance had caught and caged, and his delight had been, for several days past, to gather round him a company of his companions in cruelty, and each day had with a pair of scissors amputated a limb of their trembling captive.

"Dance," said Talbot, "does not that wretched bird flutter against the wires of his cage?"

"Don't, please don't," said the unhappy youth; "why do you worry me so?"

"Answer me, Dance, why does it flutter?"

"Oh, to get out, to get away, I suppose."

"And if it did, it could not fly away. Willie wants to do the same; he wants to get away from trouble and bullying, and he is beating against his cage, and the door will open presently, and he will be gone—nothing can stop him—you cannot stop him; only He Who could destroy both soul and body in hell: Willie will be free, free for ever, and he is quite, quite fit to go."

Dance groaned deeply.

"Ain't I a murderer?" said he.

"No, Dance, no; you did not mean to kill him."

Again he groaned.

"Follow me," said Talbot; and he left the room, and Dance followed.

The two figures paused before the open door of Willie's room: there was a sound of deep, low voices whispering inside. Talbot placed his finger on his lip, and they stopped.

"Turn me round towards the candle," said the voice of Willie. There was a quiet movement on the bed as Basil lifted him up. "Thank you. Oh, I'm so tired; do wipe my forehead, and wash it with that lavender-water—it is so cool." There was a pause. "Thank you, Basil; you are so kind to me. I wonder when little Ella will come; I do so want to see her: do you think she will before I die?"

"Yes," said Basil: "I feel sure she will come."

"Dear little Ella!" said Willie. "I wonder, Basil, if

I have done all I ought to have done before I go away : I feel there are so many things I ought to do."

"There is Dance," said Basil.

"Oh, yes," said Willie; "why don't he come? I do so want to see him. When I meet God, I do not want there to be any whom I have not loved and forgiven for His sake Who forgave me. Poor Dance, he did not mean it."

"Who is that behind?" said Willie, catching Talbot's shadow.

"Only I," said Talbot; "I came with Dance."

"Dance," said Willie, "are you there? Oh, don't you fret or blame yourself: never mind, you didn't mean it; that is, you never meant to kill me; for I would say just what I think before I meet God. You only meant to terrify me; and you see God has made it the way to take me home—to take me to my mamma. You know, Dance," continued the dying boy, with a smile, "I shan't care about the broken picture now: shall I?—so don't fret: you have only helped to send me home; for you know I was but a poor little orphan, in everybody's way: and, Dance, if only you will turn from your bad ways, Dance." And the little boy's face grew grave. "Oh, Dance, do! You do swear so. Ah, you are crying now, because you don't like to see me dying; but, Dance, that doesn't matter; I don't mind it, I am glad of it: what I mean is about your soul. Do turn, and think of me dying; and when I am buried, oh, do think of me and turn to God."

Dance stared; but there was that in his face and eye that showed there was a deep feeling at work in him, more than he wished to betray.

"Don't curse me when you die," said Dance, bitterly, and looking with a scared and terrified look at Willie. "Please, please, don't curse me: they say it is dreadful to be cursed by anyone dying," he continued; and his cry rose into almost a scream, as he clenched his cold damp fingers, and stared at Willie.

"Dance was a cowardly boy—most bullies are, and he had been scared by the tales the boys delighted to fill his mind with, of trials for murder on evidence less than that

which might be brought to convict him: He had dreamt of judges and scarlet gowns, and awful-looking heads with little sharp faces and twinkling dark eyes peering out of enormous wigs, and of gallows and ropes, and he woke in the night-time screaming, and Stocker heard him, and he used to cry, "Murder!" The sight of the dying boy, the pale little face, the large glazing eye, the tiny thin hand, the quick breath, the smell of ether—all brought to his eye the dreadful reality of which the shadow had been before his mind, and he screamed in agony, "Willie, for the kind God's sake, don't curse me."

"Curse you!" said the dying boy, with deep thrilling earnestness of voice; "no, Dance. Curse you! how could I meet my SAVIOUR with a curse on my lips? no, Dance; I want to bless you, to forgive you, to love you, and I do, I do, indeed I do." And the little sufferer laid his hand on Dance's arm.

"Oh, thank you! thank you! thank you!" sobbed out Dance, as he dropped on his knee by Willie's bed. "They said you would curse me when you died, and that I could never, never get away from you. But can you forgive me after—after I—?"

"Oh, Dance, don't give way so," said the dying boy, leaning upon his elbow, and gazing full in the wretch's face, while with his finger he seemed trying to impress more clearly, by passing it over his hand, the words which came so faintly out: "Don't give way so; you have done me no harm, Dance. I don't say you have done no harm to yourself, but you have done me none. I was never a happy boy: I had no home, and now I am going Home. It says, you know, 'In My FATHER's House are many mansions,' and He is gone to prepare a place for me. What you have done has sent me Home. You know what Joseph said to his brethren, that they need not take on about him, for God had made them do it, and sent him down to—to—what is it, Basil?" said Willie, turning to Basil, who was kneeling, with his eye fixed on Willie. "Do turn to it and read it, Basil; I can't recall it—it worries me so to remember: do read it, please: it will comfort Dance. It was in the forty-fifth chapter of Genesis, I was reading yesterday. Please,

read it." And Willie sank back on his pillow; his face scarlet with colour, and his heart beating quickly.

Basil read as soon as he could command his voice enough: "'And Joseph said to his brethren, Come near, I pray: now, be not grieved or angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve life.'"

"Yes, yes," cried Willie, "that is the verse, that is the verse! Oh, dear! I read it over and over again, and meant to have said it to you, Dance, and then forgot it. Yes, I mean don't be afraid; God ordered I should die to take me Home, and perhaps to turn your hard heart. Yes, that's it." The effort was beyond his feeble strength, and he strove for breath.

"You had better come now, Dance," said Talbot. Dance was kneeling with his face on the bed.

Carriage-wheels drove under the window; there was a ring at the bell, and a carriage-door opened and steps were let down, and a little footstep heard under the window. Ella had come. She had come to see him before he died, or rather before he burst his chains and was free for ever. "Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith, Go thy way; thy son liveth."

"And this is Willie's school," thought Ella, as she looked round on the great gaunt house, dim in the night-light, and the huge hall, so cold and gusty with the wind which blew round it; and there came a certain dread over the little girl as she thought of seeing her brother, and as she remembered how her mother had looked when she died: but she was following Miss Gamp through the hall, and she gazed wistfully up the wide flight of stairs which led to the boys' bedrooms, and wondered how far off Willie's room was, and whether that noise she heard was Willie's heavy breathing.

By this time they had reached Mr. Dobson's study door. He was sitting, with his spectacles on, reading the "Annual Register," trying to make out what month Dr. Johnson died in, for he and another schoolmaster friend had had a dispute about it last evening at dinner, and the good old gentleman was bent on proving himself right.

There was a lamp on the table, and a silver waiter with a square short bottle of brandy, and another just like it, with something in it of the colour of water, and some white sugar. The county paper lay beside him, and on the rug purred a large tortoiseshell cat before a very warm red fire. Little white scarified heads of Shakspeare and Socrates, Locke and Homer, peered down from the bookcases behind on the good schoolmaster while reading. Oranges furnished the chimney-piece; and a portrait of Edward VI. hung over it, to whom Mr. Dobson was indebted for some endowment or other.

"Miss Gamp," said the fat boy, throwing open the door, as Caligula entered, little Ella following, into the warm low room. Mr. Dobson started up, and bowed politely, leaning forward with one hand on the table, and taking his silver spectacles off with the other, to see more clearly.

"Miss—Miss Grump—I have not, I think, the honour of—to—"

"Miss Gamp," said the lady, "that is my name; you doubtless know our academy. The fact is, Mr. Dobson, I ought to apologise for calling at so late an hour; but we understood this morning that this little girl's brother, who is in your school, is dying, and I thought it my duty to bring his sister at once, that—that she might see him before his demise, and being his only near relation, might be identified, with a view to receiving his share of their poor mother's property."

"Very benevolent. Yes; he is, I fear, dying: yes; a most unfortunate thing. Indeed, indeed, I fear much it may damage connexion; but the boy is to leave. The boy Dance is to leave next half; I assure you, Miss Gamp, I feel it deeply. It is not the loss I sustain by the child, for he was a parlour-boarder and paid little; but it is the misfortune of such an accident."

"It must be indeed a severe trial," said Miss Gamp; "very,—especially if the boy dies." Meantime Ella was looking round the room, and wondering at what door she would go out to see Willie, and thinking how strangely they talked. "Is that the only reason why they are sorry for Willie to die?"

Poor Ella, she was very young, and did not know how necessary prudence is in old people, and how prudence must make other inferior virtues, such as feeling and romance, give way. Her feelings were natural: you must forgive her. Miss Gamp fully hopes to eradicate them at last. She comes nominally of a good stock for such work, those Caligulas.

"Perhaps the young lady would like to see her brother," said the old gentleman, wiping his glasses and going to ring the bell: "and you, Miss Gamp, would like some supper?"

Miss Gamp thanked Mr. Dobson, and assented to the supper view, and doubted about Ella going up yet.

"Please, ma'am," said Ella, "let me go to Willie;" while her voice trembled with anxious emotion lest her suit should be denied.

"Very well," said the lady, sternly, "you shall, my dear."

"Poor little dear," said Mr. Dobson, patting Ella's head and stroking down her long golden curls which, now her bonnet was off, flowed down her neck. "Pretty little dear, I am sure her brother will be very glad to see her."

Ella looked up with swelling eyes at these kind words, and longed to kiss the schoolmaster's hand, for she was a loving little girl.

"What shall I say to Willie? What will he say to me? How will he look? Very pale, like mamma did? He used to be so pretty, I thought so." Ella's thoughts wandered on about her brother in a child's way; wondering at what was coming in that most strange and wild of all wild scenes—going to see some one dying.

"Will you trust the little dear with the maid, my housekeeper; or will you take her up stairs yourself to the sick-room, Miss Gamp?" asked Mr. Dobson.

"I? oh dear, no! I never go into a sick-room; never since my poor mother died, I never have. I have excellent health myself, and, in fact, I think it almost wrong to be ill. I have a nervous dread of an infection. My sister always takes the sick department."

The servant opened the door.

"Send Mrs. Flarty here," said Mr. Dobson, "to take the little lady to see her brother."

Mrs. Flarty came: she was a short, fat, round body, with a stern looking face, a very clean apron, with keys hanging to her waist, and in all respects as a housekeeper in a respectable academy should be.

"Take up the little lady to Master Willie's room," said Mr. Dobson; "she has come to see him—she is his sister."

"Come with me, miss," said Mrs. Flarty; and Ella left the room with the housekeeper.

Oh, will Ella ever forget that long walk from the study-door to Willie's room! the long passage, the high staircase, the number of figures which flitted here and there in her journey, the whispers she heard, the wonderings if each door would turn out to be his, the round form of Mrs. Flarty going on before her, the way she placed her left hand on her knee as she stooped forward going up stairs,—all were so impressed on her mind. At last there was the door, at the end of the passage, partly open, and there were silent sounds inside, and there was Willie. Ella's heart beat high and violently, and she scarcely knew how she should look and what she should say when she got in.

"Master Talbot," said the housekeeper, stopping at a door a little short of Willie's, "here is the orphan's sister come to see him; will you go in first and say so?"

Talbot was reading in his study, and started up; Mrs. Flarty and Ella stood at the door. Talbot's eye fell instantly on the little girl; he fancied he had seen her before, he had so well known her name: her extreme loveliness, her helpless childhood, the tears which rolled down her face; her large eye, which looked half timidly, half imploringly up in his face; her deep but very plain and simple mourning,—in a moment drew out every tender, deep part of the schoolboy's nature. There is something in female loveliness, even in a child, which attracts the gallantry and generosity of youth, especially when mixed with sorrow, and more feelings and deeper were struggling in Talbot's mind about Ella; he took the little orphan's hand and led her to a chair; in a mo-

ment she felt she was with a friend, and she felt at home. Oh, where is home but with the kind? Kindness, sympathy, and love make a home of a desert.

"Thank you, Mrs. Flarty, you can go; I will take the little lady in."

Mrs. Flarty left the room. "Bless us, daisy me! there's no need of housekeepers and the like of them, now that young gentlemen can do all the work of chaperoning young ladies! dear, dear! a match at first sight, I suppose; well, well!"

And with these half-indefinite murmurings Mrs. Flarty left the room.

Talbot slid into Willie's room, and returned immediately.

"Willie's asleep; come with me, Ella, for you see I know all about you; and Basil thinks he will wake presently, and it will be better he should see you when he wakes than be told you are here."

So saying, Talbot took the little girl's hand, and went into the room.

"Talbot, here's young Enderby wants you; he has ridden over from Morton's, and can't stop."

"I'll come directly," said Talbot from his study; and Talbot went down stairs. He opened the door of the room into which visitors were shown, and there stood Enderby, a tall handsome, well-made youth, with white trousers and a dark coat, a whip in his hand, a white hat on the table, a hair-chain with a spy-glass at the end of it. Frank Enderby was at a private tutor's six miles off, with five other private pupils, all picked and of the first water; the master was one of those clergymen who receive young gentlemen and noblemen, though the noblemen, as a matter of fact, were of that class which dispenses with the ceremony of the title. Enderby was a perfect gentleman, of most refined manners, and highly respected by all at Mr. Dobson's.

The meeting of two sixth-form boys, or one and a private pupil, is one of the most formidable things we know; it is best exemplified by one of those pictures we have seen of the meeting of Tamerlane and Bajazet, or some

such terrible idea ; they stand and look at each other as if they were positively afraid and scared at their own importance, and the awe felt about the meeting is diffused over all who witness the rencontre ; little boys look and whisper about it, big boys crowd and point, and small fags hear of it and tremble.

" Ah, Talbot ! how are ye ?" said Enderby, striking his whip against the side of his leg ; " rode over to speak about a match young Lord Dalgairn is coming to Morton's to play, and we thought if you could come over with an eleven next Thursday, we could have a good match—Morton gives the spread—what do ye say ?"

" I'll think," said Talbot.

" Well, I suppose you have a decent eleven you could pick out ; don't bring in your eleven any of your Dances or Stockers, Dalgairn is particular ; but you are up to that."

" I am a little doubtful," said Talbot ; " one or two things might—"

" What on earth's the matter ?" said Enderby, staring, and striking the head of his cane against his teeth.

" Oh, I'll give you an answer in a few minutes," said Talbot.

" Ah, then," continued Enderby, " there's another matter,—will you come and spend Sunday, you alone, and meet Dalgairn, and have a ride ? I want to get up a little fun for him."

" That I cannot do," said Talbot firmly, and looking at his friend in the face.

" Why not ?" said Enderby staring.

" Why, if you wish to know, I have arranged to take the Sacrament on Sunday, and I cannot leave then."

Not the lions in Layard's Nineveh, with the astonishment of two thousand years petrified in their eyes and mouths, could have looked so calmly astonished as our friend ; his face assumed that kind of wonder that seemed as if the expression was stereotyped, instead of being only just assumed.

" The Sacrament !" said Enderby, in a perfect maze.

" Yes," said Talbot.

" Why, what has happened ? turning saint, eh ?"

"Wait a moment, I will return an answer about Thursday," said Talbot, as he left the room.

"Basil," said Talbot, calling him out of Willie's room, softly, "just come here."

Talbot went into his study, and Basil followed.

"Basil," said his friend, laying his hand on Basil's arm, "Enderby wants us at cricket next Thursday, eleven, what shall I say? you know what I mean, I would give worlds to be off it. *He will be gone* then, you know, safe, flown, eh, Basil?" said Talbot, his voice slightly quivering with emotion.

"Yes," said the other, thoughtfully, looking out of the window. "Mr. Winter says he will not stay beyond this night at least; there's a change since you went down stairs."

"We cannot go," said Talbot.

"I think we had better," said Basil; "we cannot make the school suffer; it would be selfish; say we will go."

"But the funeral," said Talbot; "oh, how odd to talk of the funeral, Basil; but it don't matter; what is it but dust, Basil?"

"The shell empty," said the other.

"Well, that would be probably over then, and Willie a week old in heaven," said Talbot half to himself. "I do not see how we are to go, Basil."

Wonderfully Willie had worked; he had touched both hearts; Talbot would have always said "go," and Basil "don't go;" but now Talbot was softened, and Basil made firm and disciplined. The Cross of Jesus changed all: "the centurion was melted, and S. Peter became firm."

It was settled they were to go, and Talbot went and told Enderby.

"Will you come next Sunday, then?"

"No," said Talbot.

"Well, good-bye till Thursday."

"Very strange," said Enderby to himself, as he left the room and leapt on his horse, the rein of which his friend, who rode over with him, had been holding.

"Very odd," said he, as he rode away; "I don't know what has changed Talbot, I think he's mad: such a gen-

tlemanly, nice fellow generally, and now, why he's turning saint. What do you think he said? he could not come to ride on Sunday, because he was going to take the Sacrament."

"No!" said his companion; "well, that is—I could not have believed it, if I had been told. Ah, well! it's in the family; there have been two or three mad, and his aunt died mad at ninety. She was quite well up to a few years of her death, and then she went cracked."

"Really! what were the symptoms?"

"Oh! she gave a thousand pounds to some society for sending out missionaries, and wanted to put up a stained-glass window in a church, and things of that sort."

"Oh, yes!" said Enderby. "Well, I suppose poor Talbot is going too; it's very sad, very;" and the two rode at a brisk gallop.

There are two and two, Enderby and his friend on horseback; and Talbot and Basil in Willie's room. Which are right? which maddest? where will all be a hundred years hence?

The room was still; the one candle burnt on the table, just lighting Willie's head, and left his shadow large on the wall; he was fast asleep; bottles and oranges lay still on the table. His hand lay out on the sheet, the other on the pillow holding his face; his lips were apart, for he breathed with difficulty; his forehead was pale, and his face, though so thin, was flushed. Basil sat in the old place, and Talbot was sitting at the head, reading to himself; a watch ticked audibly on the table, and sounds went on down the passage, and at the bottom of the staircase; and on the bed sat Ella, at Willie's feet; her hands were folded together, and her hair hung as it fell when she took her bonnet off, which lay by her side on the bed; her cheeks were wet with the tears which still were falling down. He was asleep when she came in, and was not yet awake, and did not know she was there; he was so fast asleep; she had been there twenty minutes, and no one had spoken yet. He moved, and was again still, fast asleep, again his hand fell on her hand, which she had placed near to his; the

brother and sister were hand in hand, Willie and Ella, yet he did not know it. Basil felt a choking feeling, and a tear stole down his cheek. Again Willie moved and turned his face towards the candle, and was again still; on he slept, his hand in Ella's, and her soft blue eyes were fixed without moving on his face. He opened his eyes.

"Willie," said Basil, "didn't you want Ella?"

"Oh, I am so tired," said he, looking at the candle, "so tired! Ella, why don't you come? dear mamma's tired of waiting and sitting in the chair; she's quite, quite pale; she won't live, Ella, I know she won't; do come. There's a pond there, the trees are in the field down at the bottom; don't go near it, dear, the water is so cold if you fall in, and Dance is by it; it's moonlight down there, but it's sunshine up here in the shrubbery. Mamma, mamma, I'm coming—your little boy is coming directly to you; don't cry, I will be with you almost in a minute, dear mamma. Oh! where am I?" and he started up in his bed and looked round with a frightened stare, till his wandering eyes fell on Ella, and there stayed a full minute, gazing earnestly on her face; and he felt and pressed her little warm hand in his, and then he looked at Basil, and then at his sister, and then he said, "Ella!"

He knew her; and Ella burst into tears and cried, "Willie, Willie," and threw her arms round his neck, and cried; and Willie wept on her neck.

Little Ella was come, and Willie and Ella were together, the brother and sister; and they talked together an hour or more, dear, sweet words, such as brothers and sisters talk when they meet as they met to-night.

"Just before I went away, sweet Nelly, I am so glad you came; what'll you do, Nelly? Oh, I wish you could go too."

"Oh, I wish I could," said Ella, bursting again into tears; "to be alone, and no one to love, and no one to love me."

"Jesus will love you, Ella, so much more when you are alone."

"Yes, yes, I know; but I can't see Jesus."

"Never mind, you can feel Him, Ella, and He sees you and loves you, and will never leave you till you get to heaven."

"Oh, Willie, suppose I am not good by and by?"

"I will pray for you, Nelly dear, and I know He will keep you good; He says so. Basil, kneel down, and I will pray;" and Basil and Talbot knelt down, and Willie put his hands together and prayed.

"Blessed Jesus, take care of Ella, and never let the devil harm her, and bring her safe to Thy peaceful fold above; lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen."

"Amen," said each voice in the room. Oh, is there not a power in prayer—the prayer of the saint of God just before he goes away—passing all words?

"Ella, pray every day; pray, Ella; never leave it off for anything. I have felt such comfort in praying."

"Yes, but I must alter my prayer; I must leave out you, Willie," said the little girl, sobbing.

"I shall be safe, dear Nelly, far from Satan and evil; perhaps I shall pray for you up there."

"Oh, Willie, when the devil gives me bad temper, may I think of you? that won't be wrong, will it?"

"No, Nelly, it can't be; but pray to Jesus. I can't say it too often, for He is very kind, and gives us strength to do and bear everything. Ella, I should so much like to sing once more, before I go, together; I think I may have a little strength to-night—to-morrow I feel I shall not; will you try?"

"Yes, I'll try," said the little sobbing girl, trying to clear her throat; and she began singing in a low soft voice, yet so sweet,

"Jerusalem, my happy home!

Name ever dear to me;

When shall my sorrow have an end,

In joy, and peace, and thee?"

Oh, it sounded so sweetly in the room of death—those two little voices; and Basil and Talbot listened, listened till they felt as if their hearts would break, for they never heard such singing. Some say that some boys had crept

into the long passage, and then stole away again into the school, crying—I do not know; do schoolboys ever cry? is it lawful? Schoolboys are generally above it; but some say that these did.

“I am tired, Nelly; I must go to sleep; come and put your face close to mine, quite close, and your arm round me—there, just as we used to do when mamma was alive, and we lay together in our little crib, and we can feel like old days.” And Ella lay close to Willie, her wet cheek and his flushed one, and her hand was in his, and presently they were worn out and fast asleep, tired with sorrow, close to each other, brother and sister: and Talbot and Basil watched them as the candle shone on their faces. “So He giveth His beloved sleep,” said Basil; “lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in death scarce divided.”

It was the day after this that Enderby came, and the interview we mentioned took place between him and Talbot, and the latter showed marks of insanity. Was he mad?

CHAPTER XI.

HOME.

THERE was a meeting of the *αριστοι*; it was about Willie. Do not think it was out of place, or inappropriate: it was far from it. Boys will do things their own way, and so did Mr. Dobson's. The occasion was good; but they were in earnest, real earnest—no hypocrites. No people are less so than schoolboys; it is not their vice.

“Talbot wants to say something,” said Brooke, looking out of window, a little ashamed of speaking.

“Oh, ah!” said Dobbs, still more ashamed of not making a joke, and yet he had rather have died than make one.

“Talbot will be sure to do the right thing,” said

Wimpkins, in a simpering manner, assuming a sadness in his tone, which the other two had discarded.

Brooke stared at him, and looked out of window again.

"How is the boy?" said Dobbs, in a patronising tone, which really meant that if he recovered he would speak to him, and that if he could do a trifle for him he should not be sorry.

But Talbot entered, and shut the door; and all was quiet.

"Oh, I called you together because the little lad is dying, and will scarcely live through the night; and I thought I should hardly be doing my duty as head of the school, if I did not say that he said good-bye to you, and hoped that you would forgive anything he had done wrong to you, and that—"

But Talbot's voice faltered; his self-command forsook him.

"Poor boy!" said Brooke, "I've nothing to forgive him; poor boy!"

"Forgive, eh?" said Dobbs; "oh, yes; sorry for him; die to-night, eh! that's strange, too."

"Would he wish to speak to us, that we might receive his last remarks?" said Wimpkins; "I should be very willing, however painful to me, to go."

"He was always a very good little fellow with his lessons," said Pulteney, as he leant back in his chair, each time looking minutely at his watch-chain; "is there anything that we can do, that we ought to do, that you think we ought to do?"

"Well," said Talbot, "I was thinking myself of receiving the Holy Communion next Sunday; I think it would please him to know that we intended it, and I've made up my mind to begin; and I should say there could hardly be a better opportunity for others to begin it too."

It cost Talbot something to say this; still, he did say it, and he did it from a strong sense of duty, and he waited the result; and the result was just what it ought to have been. The *apôtres* said not a word; there was profound silence; a few little awkward movements, that was all. Pulteney moved in his chair, and looked more closely into his watch-chain, and merely put his glass to

his eye and examined a print on the wall ; Brooke looked, and Dobbs stared.

"I shall," said Talbot, putting his hand through his hair, and gazing at something on the table,— "I shall be very thankful if I am not alone ; I feel sure it is the right thing to do."

And because there was nothing said, you think there was no good done ? wait a Sunday or two. There was no laugh, no scorn, no wonder shown ; and that was much, very much, with seven big fellows in a small room at school, and the head of the school talking about the Sacrament.

"There is one more thing," said Talbot : "Enderby has asked us to cricket next Thursday, and I have accepted it in the name of the school ; have I done right ?"

"We will leave it to you ; we are quite sure you will do best," said Trevelyan.

"It's rather soon, after what may happen," said Wimpkins.

"It won't hurt him, anyhow," said Brooke.

"No," said Pulteney ; and they broke up.

Not much done, you will say ; true enough : still that scene had done its work, and had its striking feature.

Miss Gamp and Mr. Dobson sat together over their bottles : Miss Gamp had taken off her bonnet, and sat in a small bonnet-cap fitted tight to her head, and a very neat border with lavender-coloured flowers, and her hair so beautifully plaited to her head, that there was some doubt if it were not a wig.

"It is very sad, madam, that these unfortunate events should disturb the serenity of scholastic pursuits, very ; they cannot be avoided, as I dare say you know. I have had very few such misfortunes in my academy, very few."

"I always, my dear sir, prevent these untoward circumstances, by sending away invalids at the first warning ; I never permit death in the house, never."

"Please, sir," said the footman, opening the door suddenly, "Mr. Talbot wants to know if he may speak to you ?"

"Yes," said Mr. Dobson, "undoubtedly; show Mr. Talbot in—with your leave, at least," said he, looking at Miss Gamp, and lifting his spectacles on to the ridge of his nose.

"Oh, by all means," said the lady, a little anxious to see Talbot, of whom she had heard before.

Talbot entered.

"Sir," said he, "I have come to know whether you will send for Mr. Morris; Willie wishes to receive the Holy Communion, as he feels his hours are getting very few."

"Ha! you don't say so?" said the old gentleman; "poor little lad! he wants to—what?" said he, placing his hand up to his ear to hear more plainly.

"To receive the Holy Communion, sir."

"Extraordinary!" said Miss Gamp. "What! a child! why, I have never received it, nor did my honoured parent till a week before he died; you never—Mr. Dobson?"

"Well," said the old gentleman, a little perplexed; "it's rather a peculiar request, Talbot; he has never been confirmed, I think?" evidently thinking he had hereby found a mode of escape from his dilemma.

"No, sir; but is that necessary?"

Mr. Dobson was again perplexed.

"Certainly," said Miss Gamp, dogmatically, "quite."

"Well, I should think so, certainly, quite," said Mr. Dobson, gaining courage from the lady's decision.

"I have known, sir, some who have received it without being confirmed; and surely the hour of death might be a time for it, more especially when one desires it so earnestly as he does."

Talbot spoke earnestly and with deep emotion, and Mr. Dobson was startled.

"Well," said he, after a moment's consideration, "I will leave it to you, Talbot; and if you think good, you can run and fetch Mr. Morris."

Talbot's decision was not long in making; he darted from the room, and was soon on his way to the rectory.

"You are too easy, in my opinion, my good sir," said Miss Gamp; "the application was monstrous, prepos-

terous; what can a child know about such solemn subjects?"

"Well, I confess," said the weak but good-natured schoolmaster,—“I confess I hardly knew how to answer; but I suppose, if a child be really religious and dying, it would be lawful for him to take it: but we will ask Mr. Morris. After all, the decision must be left with him;” and so the matter dropped.

Mr. Morris came, and all was ready for the last Feast, the farewell Feast. Oh, how many bid farewell there for a long, long time, and yet to meet again at last! Jesus bade farewell at that Feast, and so do we. There was a large company gathered round the door through which Willie was going home—a large company—a happy company of guests. Talbot was to receive it for the first time, and Willie for the first and last; and Basil and one or two of the boys had asked to come, all full of holy resolutions to overcome self and serve God; and that was to be their seal. Willie was not going alone to heaven; he was leading more than one in his track. A schoolboy can do that—a young, weak, uncared-for schoolboy—by the mere weight of example.

Ella sat on the bed; her hand was in Willie's, her warm dry one in his cold clammy one, and he was propped on pillows; he, with his sunk, pale, ashy face, and large, sparkling, intense eye, without a tear, against her blushing child-like face, and eyes full of scalding tears ready to fall; his long, damp, dark hair falling back over the pillow, and her long fair ringlets mingling with his.

Mr. Morris had been with Willie alone three or four times during his short illness, and had questioned him deeply and closely as to his state of mind, and was more than satisfied with it all. Willie had longed for these moments. It is wonderful what God will do for the soul; how a child can look calmly on the rolling of that cold, chilling stream, and really yearn for the blessed feast of love, as the great satisfying object of the soul; but so it is. It was a hallowed scene that night; and the eyes of the little sufferer often wandered round on the little company with delight as he saw them round him.

It was over—that first and last Communion:

“Dear Nelly,” said he, looking at her while she held his hand in hers. His breath grew very heavy, and he could not say more; but he smiled very happily.

“It’s so—so happy—dear Ella—is it not?—to be—to be going—to heaven.”

“Oh, Willie, Willie, why can’t I go too? why should we be divided?”

“Up—there,” said Willie with difficulty, and trying to lift up his hand, which fell weak on the bed.

“He means you will be together in heaven, Ella,” said Talbot, wiping off the large drops which hung on his dewy forehead. His head was leaning on Basil’s breast; the candle was a little behind him, and cast the shadow on his face; the window was open to admit air, and the moon shone sweetly and softly on the floor and on the bed, on the wall and on Willie’s forehead. There were three or four boys in the room, standing rather behind, but deeply silent, and full of many thoughts. There came a long silence—very long; and there was not a sound, except the long-drawn breathing; that long silence in which no one ever dares scarcely to breathe—so long that it seems hours, and each little thought leaves a deep impression on the sand of the memory.

Strange scenes, in one house, to go on at once under one roof! And the moon looked on all, and made no difference in its gentle shining—shone on the pillow, where a soul was just going to meet God; in the room, where angels were waiting for the spirit; where He Who had the keys of death and hell was standing to unlock the door for one more, and then to take him into the long corridor which leads to the eternal world; and having had a short but deep communing, to open the other door—oh, of which? heaven or hell? Thank God, no doubt in this case. Oh, what a scene, breathing of holy things, was that schoolboy’s room! And then downstairs, those few who talked together as if something was going on, dreading the awe of that upstairs reality. Still under the same roof. And the schoolroom-boys were sitting silently with slates drawing, and two or three more reading, with their damp hands thrust through their hair, nervous and half frightened at

what was going on upstairs, keeping the candles snuffed for fear they should be left one moment in the dark, or see a winding-sheet in the wick, and yet keeping the door open to hear what was going on, and starting every now and then at little sounds, as if expecting and dreading the moment at which the soul would go, and there would be a corpse in the house. Some went out into the yard, and stood there listening and gazing upstairs to see the little gleam of light which shot down the passage from Willie's door. A few went out half-inclined to find fault with the solemnity around them, but half impressed by it; and the servants wondered downstairs.

"Poor little lamb," said the cook, crying; "poor little lamb. Ah, well, he's going to a better place."

"I always did think he wouldn't live, that there orphan; he was so 'cocious and quiet like," said the housemaid.

"There'll not be many as'll miss him: he's a horphin, got nothin' aside a sister, poor soul—no one to follow him like, and go into black; very awkerd. I allers did think them horphins hawful things," said the kitchen-maid, chiming in.

"Poor little lamb," said the cook again; "well, we must all go."

"It makes one consider one's latter end," said Mrs. Flarty, who had just joined the gathering, from sheer terror of being alone in her own room.

They were there, boys and servants conversing, and terrified. And yet, what was it all about? a spirit was going to Jesus, going home.

"Oh, dear!" said Willie, turning his head, half asleep; and he started and stared at Ella.

"Willie," said Ella, softly. The voice brought him round, and he smiled.

"I thought I was gone," said he, in a faint whisper; "I thought I was in heaven: it was so lovely. I'm so faint and cold in the water—do wet my head, please—Dance, don't throw Ella in." Talbot took a sponge and wetted his forehead. Willie sighed again, and fell asleep. Again he woke, and turned his eye up to Basil, and moved his lips; "Come unto—" whispered he. Basil understood him, and took the Bible and read the verse

Willie had so often loved in the 11th chapter of S. Matthew. He smiled while he read it; then came a few sobs of deep agony and hard struggling. Two boys glided into the passage frightened, but neither durst tell the others why; and Talbot drew instinctively away, but did not go.

"Oh, he's dying," cried little Ella, burying her face in agony. But it was only a few minutes; one dark storm on the bank of Jordan—that was all; one cold, cold wind blowing up the stream, just as he was putting his foot into it. His "to-morrow" had come; he had been "sanctified by the LORD" yesterday, and was ready to cross to-day.

Then came a calm so still and quiet; JESUS came, "and there was a great calm," the wind was still. The devil's last power over, he had left the house, and the unseen Figure was now standing by with the key in his hand.

"Willie," said Talbot, bending over the damp white face, which shone with the dew of the agony.

Willie smiled.

"When thou passest through the valley of the shadow of death, I am with thee."

"Open the window—I want to see the moon."

"It is open, Willie; I will push the curtain aside."

"Ah, there! I'm coming, mamma, I'm coming; don't call so often. It'll be so happy, so blessed, to be with you. Oh, I'm so tired—lift up my head—I can't see anything? Why is it so dark?"

"It isn't dark, Willie."

"I'm under water."

"The Jordan, Willie, the narrow stream, the dark short river—it will soon be over now."

"Oh, yes—I'm so cold—Jesus, Jesus, pardon me!" and there was one long moment, very long, and only breathing hard.

"Dark, dark, all dark, all dark," and he turned his head on the pillow towards Ella, but did not seem to see her; "I wish I was on the other side."

"You will be there presently, Willie; He passed that flood before you: it is your last sorrow, your last pain," said Basil.

"Dear Basil," said he, turning his sightless eyes towards where the voice came from.

All the clothes were off his breast, and his neck was bare to let him get breath.

"It'll soon be over," said Willie.

"Parting soul ! the flood awaits thee,
And the billows round thee roar ;
Yet look on : the crystal city
Stands on yon celestial shore.

"There are thrones and crowns of glory,
There the living waters glide :
He Who passed that flood before thee
Guides thy path to yonder side."

"Blessed JESUS—my own mamma—coming, coming—so beautiful—so beautiful—all light—and joy—and peace—"

There was a long pause, and no one moved ; no breath was heard. One hand lay on his shirt-collar, and the other in Ella's ; the lips were open, and the white teeth shone through ; the eyes were looking up, and a smile was on the face ; the hair lay wet and dank upon the pillow. It was only a cage, the wires of an empty cage : the bird had flown, gone up to its own bright home.

But there was more than a long five minutes before they knew it. They still gazed and waited for the last breath. They waited—Talbot by his side, with his eye fixed on his face, and his hand under his chin ; Ella on the bed, with her eyes fixed on his, and holding in hers the chilling hand ; Basil behind his head, looking down ; the boys at the door, looking at each other, frightened—frightened at the stillness. None of them seemed to know the cage was empty, the bird flown. None of them had seen death before. A cloud had been before the moon, and it suddenly moved away, and the beautiful light shone out and fell on the smiling face ; and the light evening wind came in with it, and waved a few of the dark hairs, and they seemed to tell the story : they spoke ; "Willie is dead. Willie is up here with us, past the wind and past the moon."

Talbot saw it first ; he took his hand from his face, and

closing his eyelids, said, "So He giveth His beloved sleep."

"Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee," said Basil, as he took Talbot's hand and pressed it in his own.

Schoolboy friendship! Oh, that night! how deep, how true, how pure!

"He's dead," whispered one of the boys at the door, and turned away his face, but had not the courage to go out.

"Is he dead?" said another, turning his head timidly to look at the bed.

Ella looked anxiously from face to face. "It's very long before he breathes, isn't it?" said she, hurriedly. "Willie, dear; do wake and speak to your own pretty little Ella. Wake him—won't you?" said she hurriedly to Basil; "do, do wake him; I want to say something to him."

"Willie has gone to heaven, dear Ella," said Talbot, with a choking voice.

"Oh, call him back, call him back one minute—one, one little minute, just to say one dear little word—please do."

"You would not wish him back from heaven, Ella, would you?"

But the little girl had sunk on her brother's smiling face with one loud cry of exceeding bitter grief.

But never mind; "Heaviness may endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning."

CHAPTER XII.

THE DAY AFTER—CRICKET.

WILLIE lay dead and quiet. His coffin had not yet come; his long hair was combed straight over his waxen forehead; his shroud with its long white frills all but covered his hands, which lay on each other on his breast;

the curtain was drawn over his window, and a sheet had been thrown over his face. Many of the boys had been in to see him, and many deep and real promises were made to God to love Him better.

Willie's quiet dead body was doing its work. The school was never so real and under such an impression before. No one was angry with Dance. The poor wretch skulked from morn to even, and most of the fellows spoke kindly to him. The feeling was too real for any expression of feeling of that kind; and, what was more unaccountable, no one talked religiously. Talbot moved about his usual work, and never spoke as if there was a deep conviction from heaven upon him, while a very halo of reverence seemed to glow around him in the eyes of the other boys.

"Boys, look here, on Thursday is the cricket-match at Enderby's. I've promised we'll go. Have the eleven all ready for the honour of the school,—do you see? We've not been beaten yet, and we'll not let them beat us now; eh, boys?" He spoke decidedly and manfully and energetically, as he ever did, only a little paler and a little graver; that was all.

There was a minute's silence; the boys were a little taken back.

"Oh, yes, we'll take care," said Samuel Veasy.

"Fletcher, you'll see to the bats and oil them?"

"Yes, Talbot, don't fret; I'll see to it all, stunning."

"I'm going to meet Enderby for a walk; can I take any message, Talbot, or make any arrangements?" said Trevelyan.

"No, I settled all that when he was here."

"I was going to say," said Wimpkins, muttering from the far end of the room, in a low voice; "I was going to suggest, Talbot, whether, perhaps, as a tribute—as a tribute—in—in—to—to—we should not delay the match till after—"

"You fool," said Brooke.

"Hush, hush, Wimpkins; nonsense! Talbot seems hurt: he knows what he's about."

Talbot looked a little paler. "I had thought of that; but—but, I believe, all feel with me that—"

"All, all!" said many voices at once; "all! Talbot's right, quite right."

Talbot was right, and Wimpkins sat down, not discomfited, for he was never but beaten off the field.

All rose, and the play-room was emptied and the school-room filled. Talbot said little, but he set the tone of the whole place: his few marked words about cricket at such a crisis made every little boy do his addition sum like a hero.

"Unfeeling, a very leetle unfeeling in our good friend Talbot," said Wimpkins, as he was leaving the room.

Unfeeling! Then go up with Talbot five minutes after, when he stopped at Basil's door, who had been all the morning with little Ella, and she had just fallen into a deep sleep, with dry tears on her sweet flushed face, and her red lips just parted over her pure white teeth, and every now and then a deep-heaved sigh, as if her sleep had "caught the trick of grief," and then a smile, as she dreamt of Willie and the golden gateway, through which he was going to meet that long form which came to meet him, and Ella said, "Mamma, Willie, stay a moment," in her sleep, and turned round.

"Basil," said Talbot's voice.

"Coming," said he, and they went to Willie's room.

The coffin had come, and they went to lay him in it—not him, his remains; and they did it quietly and reverently; their quivering lips alone betraying the emotion of the two schoolboys.

"There, that will do," said Talbot. "I've been thinking, Basil, that we might do something for poor Dance, he is always wandering about, unnoticed and disconsolate. I shall ask him to my room, and try and draw him out. He has been a wicked fellow, and a coarse and vulgar one, but Willie has taught a lesson; eh, Basil?"

"True," said Basil; "I was thinking the same myself. Anything that you do, Talbot, I will do, too."

They laid the lid of the coffin on Willie's calm face, and silently left the room.

The day for the cricket-match came, a bright day, and all was ready. The school was prepared, at Talbot's bid-

ding, to go how and where he would. Never was there more perfect order and attention. Many eyes were cast up at the window of the room where Willie's body lay, but no one spoke of him. There had been a discussion among many of the boys, which referred to receiving the Holy Communion on the following Sunday, with many their first Communion, and that intention deeply solemnised them. The whole school set off, all in an altered frame of mind. Some had known death before, but all had much to learn.

In February, the sky speaks of summer, and we are glad; there is a wind in March which shakes all to the roots, and we are disappointed. Never mind, the February frost had done nothing without the March wind that settled the soil round the roots; the sun of June would have drawn it up, and it would not have clung close enough to get moisture.

A long and well-known lane led the way to Mr. Morton's. By the side of that lane was the little wood where Basil had often walked with Willie, and where he had first heard him mention his longings for Home. The sun of the late autumn shone red and piercing on the heaps of withered leaves and through the leafless boughs. The boys walked two and two, most of them, half-a-dozen little ones in front, arm-in-arm; they were talking of marbles and of changing alleys and taws, and were talking very low for fear anyone should hear them, and they thought it would be wrong to be talking of anything except Willie, if of anything at all now he lay dead. They did not at all forget him, still they had rather talk of something else.

"I think there will be a great many at the Communion on Sunday," said Basil.

"Yes, I expect it; I half wish there were not," said Talbot.

"Half wish there were not!" said Basil, surprised. "Why, Talbot, what can make you say that?"

"Well, I don't know, I am half afraid of excitement, excitement isn't religion."

"There comes in your cold temperament, Talbot: I don't like it," said Basil, in a disappointed tone.

"Don't be vexed, Basil; I meant nothing the least damping, but I do dread the fragile nature of youthful feeling. There's D'Oyley already, I see, engrafting some religious intention on his natural love of excitement and display, and he is professing that it all belongs to Willie's death. And yet I don't want to be—but I don't trust it—I had rather—ah, well! I'd rather, in short, he wouldn't stay on Sunday. Why, what's the matter, old fellow, eh?" said Talbot, turning round quickly to Basil, who was knocking the tops of flowers off with his stick, and looked angry at Talbot's remarks.

"Oh, nothing, nothing; is this a bean?" said Basil, as he looked down to examine a nettle which grew in the hedge.

"Come, come, Basil, don't be vexed with me, there's a good fellow: it's all nonsense; you know that I didn't mean to say anything to throw cold water on you, dear Basil."

"Oh, no; oh, no, I wasn't the least annoyed," said Basil in a most annoyed tone, and looking round again at the bank and the nettles. "I only hope I shall never forget the effect of his death, and that I at least for one shall keep the influence in my mind through life."

"Who doubts it?" said Talbot, taking his arm: "Who doubts it? Basil, you should not be so easily annoyed with me; I am not; I meant no harm; no one could love that dear child, more than I."

But Basil was unconquerable, and would persist in his humour, and Talbot sunk into silence. Basil was sure of himself, and imagined nothing could shake him from the ground on which he stood of earnest determination.

Ah, Basil, you are young; you have many, many more sorrows yet to learn before you know the meaning of many of the high truths and statements you utter. Even you may be a wiser man before Sunday. One thing which Basil had specially declaimed against to Talbot had been Mr. Morton, to whose house they were going; he thought him so worldly and irreligious, and the present occasion called out more strongly than ever his impression.

"Ah, Talbot, I am glad to see you," said a clear hearty

voice of a gentleman who came up, dressed in a light summer dress with flannel trousers and a loose blue coat, a glass in his eye; tall, thin, good-looking, clear, and indifferent. Three youths were walking with him, dressed rather alike.

"Capital day for cricket, sir," said Talbot.

"Very good! admirable!" said Mr. Morton, in a quick manner and a deep tone to his voice.

Enderby had told Mr. Morton of the conversation he had had with Talbot, and Mr. Morton would scarcely believe it.

"Oh," said he, throwing down the "Edinburgh" on the table, and standing up, with his hands behind him, before the fire, and looking down on his table, under his eyebrows: "you don't say so! Very sad! very! Eh, Talbot a saint! Ah, well, sad! fine fellow! It'll wear off. Only we must rally him, we must laugh it out of him. Ha, ha! what would Lady Lucy Talbot—a very nice woman—I can just see how she would take it. Well, Enderby, where's Titus Livius? are you ready to read, eh?"

"Yes, sir, quite. It's very distressing about Talbot; but we must do something."

"Well, well, never mind that now: to work, Enderby." And though Enderby began reading, Mr. Morton threw up his leg on the arm of the chair, and leant against the leather back, and went on reading the "Edinburgh," on "the lost writings of Stesichorus."

He was in a delightful room; three windows down to the ground opening on a gravel terrace to a garden below full of early flowers. The sun shone in, strongly mellowed by a yellow blind, and rested on a stand full of chrysanthemums and geraniums, so that the whole air of the room smelt of heat and perfume and Russian leather. On the table was a shelf of books, containing Wordsworth, Macaulay's Essays, three volumes of Tacitus, half-bound in Russia-leather with gilt tops, Ariosto, Dante, a volume of Barrow, Adam Smith, and the like: scattered about were a large bone paper-knife, several letters, a massive silver inkstand, pens, Coleridge's

Table Talk, the Last Days of Pompeii, and Carey's Dante, with a large blue-book of the Minutes of the Government Inspectors of Schools. Over the fire was a large picture of the Madonna; two of Overbeck's, S. John and the Sibyl, and others, round the room. By the by, what has S. John to do with the Sibyl? The bookcase was full of delightful books, mellowed in the sunshine. There was a Persian carpet, matting by the windows, and a very large rug. The room was large, light, and gentlemanly.

"Very well, very well! that'll do," said Mr. Morton, as he drew down his leg from the chair, and let the "Review" fall on his knee, and proceeded to cut his nails with a pen-knife, after Enderby had read through four chapters of Livy. Mr. Morton said quickly, "The Censors; some think they—nonsense; but 'it's absurd quite. Ah, well."

The Livy dropped, and Mr. Enderby, seated on the other side, looked at his gentlemanly tutor.

"Hem," said Mr. Morton, "this affair of Talbot. Eh a saint! well! So," continued he, looking up at the Madonna, "A saint, eh!"

Yes, a saint, Mr. Morton. Why do you look at the Madonna? Oh, only as a matter of taste. Exactly so, I expected it.

"Well, we must beat it out of him."

"Yes, sir," said Enderby, quickly and softly, "it is so ungentlemanly, so like those ungentlemanly fellows, the Puritans, and S. Ambrose, and Cromwell,—nasty canting hypocrisy."

"Hem! well, Enderby, as to S. Ambrose, I suppose he wasn't much of a Puritan, was he, Enderby?" said the good-natured tutor, laughing.

"Oh, wasn't he? well, it's all the same thing."

"Oh, yes, yes, yes," said Mr. Morton, afraid of losing Enderby's good opinion.

"So unlike Claverhouse, and Tillotson, and Prince Rupert, and Bishop Butler, I should think," mused Enderby, not wishing by any means to be so ungentlemanly as to be without any religion or religious models.

"What kind of boy is this Basil? I don't know him."

"Oh, he's a puzzle; has in him some spirit and life, but has strange notions about religion. It's he has influenced Talbot."

"Ha, has he? Ah, well, it's an age when these kind of fancies take youths. You've been remarkably free, Enderby."

"Yes, sir," said the pupil, with a smile, and putting his glass into his eye, and looking round the room, and then through the window: "but here they come; Talbot, eleven and all."

Mr. Morton and Enderby rose and went to meet them, and the meeting was as we described above.

"Talbot, do come and ride with us on Sunday. Dalgairn's coming, and we shall have a good ride," said Mr. Morton, in an indifferent air, as they all sat down to luncheon after the first innings, in their flannel trousers and jerkins, smelling of the handle of the bat, and each one remarkable for his extremely clean white collar.

Talbot was near Mr. Morton, and Basil below him.

"I'm very much obliged to you, but I fear the engagement I spoke of to Enderby will quite prevent me."

"Ah, well, I'm sorry; should have liked you to meet him; monstrous agreeable, gentlemanly fellow, just the fellow you would have liked. They would have well suited each other, would they not, Enderby?" said Mr. Morton, putting his glass to his eye, and looking down the other side of the table, as with a feeling of entire indifference. "What, you've had some accident, some misfortune at Dobson's. Ah, I heard of it; some child drowned. Very unfortunate for poor Dobson; a good thing it wasn't an older and more important pupil."

These remarks, said in a low tone of apparent indifference, and addressed apparently to all the tent, struck home to the heart of many there. Talbot looked across at Basil, and Basil turned pale. There was a time and not long ago, when Mr. Morton's raillery and pressing him to meet Lord Dalgairn would have roused strange

feelings of gentlemanly shame in Talbot; but there was no such feeling now, nothing seemed to shake him.

"How absurd," said Enderby, in a low voice to one of the boys sitting next him; "how absurd, how sad it is that a fine spirited fellow like Talbot should be so led by such a young fool as this."

"Who?"

"Oh, I mean that young adventurer, who they say has come to the school dropped like a foundling at the gate, or tied up at the knocker of the door, and turned Talbot's brain with some mad methodism or other."

"Indeed; and did he kill the child you mean?"

"No, no, fool; the fellow isn't a murderer."

"Oh, I thought you meant he got it up for effect."

"On my word, Effingham," said Enderby, bursting out laughing at the perfectly grave face with which Effingham made the last remark: "you are the most absurd fellow, there's no knowing whether you are in joke or earnest. Ha! ha! No, I mean a fellow with black eyes and dark hair, who stood fagging at cricket, licking his shirt-sleeves as if he was drinking draughts of starch, and looking very forlorn; a young fool, who missed two full-pitches."

"Oh, ah, they call him Basil."

"Yes, well he's the fellow; they say he chummed with the dead child, and turned Talbot into a saint; I wish he'd died too, and gone to dust with the darling."

Basil overheard all this, for he was sitting at a side table with his back to them. At first he turned pale and left off eating, and only drank beer in long sips; then he grew hot, and coloured up, and ate large pieces of bread: he heard the names that were heaped on himself, one especially, and he bit his lip. Then he heard them abuse Willie—Willie who lay dead, enclosed in that little home where all Basil's deepest feelings seemed now turned and centred. That he could not bear, and he sprang up from his seat and walked quietly over to Enderby and laid his hand calmly on his shoulder, while his lips quivered with rage, and said, "You are a liar and a coward."

This was strong language, and what Enderby was not

much used to; he looked round calmly and astonished, and then slowly rose. A well-bred gentleman is seldom at a loss to know how to act on such occasions; perfect coolness and self-confidence, and a clear view of the weak point of your antagonist, and bitter sarcasm, complete the conduct necessary for a crisis.

"Who are you?" said he quietly, and looking Basil in the face with a smile. "By-the-by, Effingham," continued he, without waiting for Basil's reply.

"Holloa, old fellow," said Effingham.

"I say, Effingham, did you read that story I gave you the other day, of the foundling which was left tied to a knocker at the French master's door, and turned out to be a nobleman? Eh, oh: if you haven't, you should read it, it's capital.—Well, sir," said he turning to Basil, "and pray may I ask whom I have the honour of addressing?"

By this time, what with the story of the foundling, and the manner of his antagonist, the fire of Basil's temper was completely up: all eyes were turned towards them, and Talbot and Mr. Morton had approached the scene of conflict.

"Basil," said Talbot, in a low voice.

"Hollo, Enderby," said Mr. Morton, "why what's the matter now; Don Quixote with a witness? Come, come, no hot blood, no hot blood."

"Stand back," said Basil, his lip pale as ashes and quivering with emotion; "I will have him—I will have him!"

"Let's see what he will do," said Enderby, "do let's see: this really is a chivalrous ending to the day. I had no idea there were such novels in real life."

What would have been the end of the scene cannot be known, but Mr. Morton's interference, and Talbot's strong arm on Basil's shoulder, ended the conflict.

"Pray, Basil," said Talbot's voice in his ear, "Pray, Basil, be still and quiet; think, think, after the last few days!" The appeal was not in vain, and Basil moved away with Talbot outside the tent.

The party was quickly broken up. Mr. Morton drew Talbot into his room, and expressed a thousand regrets

at what had happened, and tried to assail Talbot through every most available part. He attacked Basil, and laughed at the possibility of Talbot's really being intimate with him. He ventured on the ground about Willie, but found it very like a quicksand; he could make no stand upon it, so he gave up the contest fairly vanquished.

The cricket day was over, and they returned. There was no return match, as it was now in winter; and it was only by taking advantage of one of those clear and beautiful November days that they were able to play. Basil deeply cast down, and Talbot calm and quiet; the other boys rather more silent than usual after a cricket day; all feeling that there had been something on their minds which had hung like a cloud over them, and which they could not shake off; all feeling, and especially Basil, that they wished they had not been to the cricket-match; still none of them knowing that that cricket day had been as deep a part of their spiritual discipline as any; it had taught them each their place; their powers and infirmities. They had had to endure the March wind, but it had not injured one single shoot of life and strength within them.

The window was open to the moonlight, which flooded over hills and hedges far away with hazy mistiness. The evening air blew into the room, and blew out the candle. Basil was leaning at the window-sill, his head out of the window, and his hands under his chin; his books lay open on the table; a low tap came at the door.

"Basil," said a low voice. Basil turned round, there was Talbot. "You are unhappy, Basil."

"Wretched. Oh, Talbot, what a fool I've been! Oh, those happy, blessed feelings I had about Willie! and those quiet talks I have had with you about him—how altered it all seems now, so spoilt, so dull, so flat! Why are we allowed to have such changes of feeling?"

"Basil, you ever used to tell me that God would have us to lean more and more on His grace, and less and less on our feelings, did you not? and is not this the very lesson you are learning? at least so it seems

to me. I don't know, you know far better than I do, but I have no doubt after all this afternoon has been a very good one for you in the long run."

Talbot spoke in his own way with quiet matter-of-fact good sense.

"Yes, yes, I know it, Talbot; but then I feel I don't love Willie now; I feel as if I were not worthy of him; I feel as if I was a humbug, a fool; I feel as if all the past was a sham."

"Nonsense," cried Talbot; "you know well that what you say is untrue; you know God has ordered it for your own good. You needn't fear, dear Basil; we all want something to pull us down."

"Yes, but then who would have thought we needed it when our feelings seemed holy and so chastened?"

"Holy, but not chastened," said Talbot. "What is the passage, you know it, Basil, better than I do, where S. Paul speaks of the abundance of heavenly revelations needing thorns in the flesh—eh, Basil?"

Basil was astonished at the truly spiritual wisdom which fell from Talbot's lips. Grace was doing its work.

"Talbot, you are right, all right, I am wrong; it's my proud, impulsive spirit; I am humbled, deeply humbled, I trust, and I thank God for it; let us pray together."

And they did pray: "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you."

The bell had tolled long and slowly through the quiet stillness of Sunday afternoon. The churchyard, soft with fading light, glowed with peaceful quiet; groups of village children lingered round the gate and near the church door, and by Willie's open grave, waiting, half curious and half frightened for the funeral.

Ella followed as chief mourner; she followed Willie to his last, long, earthly home; she didn't cry much, for she felt bewildered and confused, and wondered to herself she didn't feel it more. Many of the boys had seen Willie's quiet and beautiful corpse, and every thing seemed so awfully real to them, they felt as if till then they had been living in a dream, and only fancied things,

not felt them. They all followed, and the day had been to many the day of first Communion, the beginning of a deep, earnest new life devoted to God. Willie's death was a seed deeply sown, which was to produce a large rich harvest; it was a cross to many, and thrilling points humbled some and strengthened and emboldened others, gave confidence to one and diffidence to another; it was God's blessed means drawing many to Himself.

Ella went back after the funeral to the Misses Gamp's, so lonely! She went up to her little room, which looked out to the sea, and she sat and gazed on the far waters, and watched the tiny boats shoot across in the sunlight, and wondered where Willie was and what he was doing. She did not cry, but she sat all alone in the window; at last she couldn't help saying Willie's name, and then she burst into tears, and she thought of his dying hour, and how she had laid her head on his cheek, and how he looked when he was gone; and she thought so intently and earnestly, that it seemed to her he was there in the room. At last the little sorrower grew weary, and she laid her cheek on her pillow as the light faded away in the evening, and she fell asleep and she dreamt,—dreamt one of those sweet happy dreams of Willie and her own home she used to dream of so long ago.

CHAPTER XIII.

CRAWSHAY.

THINGS had got straight at Mr. Dobson's and were going on as usual. Dance had appeared again with something of his old effrontery, and Stocker crept out of his corner; the *apistoi* had had two meetings in Talbot's room, and had recorded sage opinions; one Billy Warner, who sold certain commodities to the school by the licence of the boys, had offended against rules of simple honesty. He had called Talbot behind his back a Methodist, and sold such enormous oysters that they needed to be eaten in two portions. He was one of those

who sold oysters, and had in the basket with them a small tin pepper-box full of large seeds, which rattled on the top like hail on a greenhouse, but wouldn't come through; he had vinegar in a large square green bottle, which once held oranges, apples, figs, sprats, and chestnuts; the *apioi* sat upon him, and declared he was to be borne no longer, he must be warned to go.

"I don't see," said Wimpkins, "why we shouldn't start some one in a shop for these matters, we should have custom enough to keep him going, that William Warner is so vulgar,—that's the worst of him."

"I don't care for his vulgarity, vulgarity doesn't hurt oysters," said Brooke.

"I'll duck him, the knave; he's got three-pen'orth of coppers of mine he won't give me," said Dobbs.

"Well, Trevelyan, why don't you speak," said Talbot.

"Oh, I quite agree with you," said Trevelyan, putting his glass to his eye, and looking full at Pulteney's face; "I quite agree with you, he does not add to the character of the place."

"Picturesque," said Pulteney; "I can't fancy the school quite without him, he's identified with it."

"Then we may consider him ousted by us?" said Talbot.

The vote was unanimous, and Billy was to go.

A new boy arrived at nine the next morning. He came in his father's dog-cart, a servant out of livery came with him; they drove a single chestnut horse; a Scotch terrier came too, which jumped out with the portmanteau. Crawshay was the boy's name; he was what boys call "old," and had been at three schools, wore a tail-coat, had a clever look, and seemed born to command.

Mr. Dobson received him with bows and state on the door-step, and assured him he remembered his excellent uncle forty years before, and he conducted him to the school-room and introduced him. All eyes were on him in a moment, and many wondered to what faction he would belong. Crawshay looked quietly and civilly round the room, was particularly polite and respectful to Mr. Dobson, and returned to unpack.

"Knowing cove," said Fletcher, looking over his slate, while he stuck the point of his pencil on the number he wanted to remember.

"He's none of your spoonies," said Stocker, shaking his head.

"No Talbotite, eh?" said Dicks.

"Dance, my boy," said Stocker, "what do you think of him?"

"Stunning," said Dance, laughing, evidently pleased in no small degree at the notice taken of him; "stunning."

Basil was reading up in his room; he was preparing for his examination—an examination for a scholarship, which was coming on in a few weeks, and which was of great importance to Basil. His means, he was always told by those who placed him at school, were small, and he must do the best he could for himself; and naturally fond of work, he had determined to try for a scholarship which was given every year at Oxford from Mr. Dobson's school, founded a hundred and twenty years before by one Zachariah Linklater, city merchant, deceased, who, in consideration of benefits received in the academy, then conducted by one Timothy Tightbush, had founded a scholarship therein for ever, for paying the expenses to the amount of £48. 16s. yearly at Oxford, together with a gift of books to the value of £5 yearly, to be given to the writer of the best English prize poem on "The Monument, and a hundred yards round it:" for it was there Mr. Linklater was born. For this scholarship Basil was trying.

The new boy now absorbed all attention; all were anxious, even Talbot—even Basil, who looked out of his fourth floor window to see him drive up.

The best way of understanding him will be from the letters which reached several friends of the boys two days after his arrival, and the questions and answers with which he opened at Dobson's.

"MY DEAR MOTHER,—I have to thank you for your last letter. Pray beg Stonehouse to see well to my Scotch terrier. A new boy has just come, whom we are

all rather full of; he's a Crawshay. My dear mother, have I not heard you speak of the Crawshays? He's very gentlemanly and affable—a little slang. Adieu.

"From your affectionate and dutiful

"CHARLES TREVELYAN."

"Dear fellow!" said his mother. "Oh, yes, I was intimate with Lady Mary Crawshay; charming woman. I knew her at Naples: very clever and entertaining. Hume, read me a little of that last novel which came from the Delaneys. I wish my dear boy was home!"

"DEAR OLD CHUM," wrote Dobbs to an old school-fellow at his last school,—“Here's a new fellow come—Crawshay—he's a slang cove, but his father drives four bays, and he drove here with a chestnut. All the fellows make up to him; he's like Jem Dickson used to be—seems born to rule. He has ten dogs; one came with him all the way from his home—a Scotch terrier, thorough bred. To see him drive the chestnut up to the door-step was the prettiest thing. Good-bye, old fellow.

"Your excellent old

"DICK DOBBS."

"MY BELOVED MAMMA," wrote Wimpkins,—“Among the arrivals at our academy has come a new boy, in the shape of a boy named Crawshay. He is very rough, and rather uncouth; he has the next room to mine, and I can perceive the scent of tobacco through the door. He walks about in creaky boots, and seems always in motion. His arrival has a little broken the *ennui* of school existence. I succeed well in my studies. Very dutiful remembrances to my father.

"Ever, my dearest mother, most attached,

"W. WIMPKINS."

"What do you think of this new fellow?" said Talbot, going up to Basil's room.

"Not much," said Basil, who was cutting his pen knives on his nail.

"No, nor do I," said Talbot. "There was a proposal

made among Brooke and one or two others, to propose him for the *apioi*; but I shall black-ball."

"So shall I," said Basil; "it would ruin it to admit such as he."

"Utterly," said Talbot.

Crawshay was proposed, and black-balled: it made a sensation through the school. On Crawshay's mind it made a deep, indelible impression, which after events never could efface. It was not long before Dance and his crew found that Crawshay belonged more to their set than to Basil's: if there had been any hesitation Crawshay's being black-balled by the *apioi* settled it at once.

"Insolent puppies! that little fool Basil, who never drove a horse in his life; and that proud, conceited Talbot. Before I would allow the school to be under the power of such fellows, I would——Why, at the last school I was at, if such fellows had existed, they would have been driven insane with being cut by everybody. It is the most sheepish place. Then, to think there is no more spirit in it! why, that fellow Talbot's nothing more than a cackling Methodist, led about by that youngster Basil; and they are all under his influence. It shan't be, if I stay through another quarter; it shan't be, that it shan't. I only hope I shall be supported." And Crawshay looked round on the group which surrounded him with devotion and ardour. "*Trigemini erant*,"—Dance, Stocker, and Spurling.

"Anything you will suggest," said the delighted three, at finding a captain whose ability, experience, and weight of character (for he was a first-rate driver, had a small stud of his own, called cigars 'weeds,' and knew personally and intimately two prize-fighters and four jockeys) were likely to lead them on to victory and success.

"We will meet in the lower schoolroom at seven this evening. I have a plan to propose," said Crawshay, "which I think will succeed."

"Done," said the three, *et manus porrigebant*; after which they departed, and the day went by as usual.

Seven o'clock came, and the room was full. The same old pictures hung round the wall as were there when we last described it, on the day of the plot against Willie's

life. Dear Willie! you are quiet now; free from the noise and cruelty of man, the temptation of Satan. But can it be that your speaking voice should have so soon died away, and its echo so little noticed? No; it did still speak. Several were absent from that room to-night who were there last time, and whose deep resolution, Willie's death, and their first Communion, were aiding to heaven. There was a company he had gathered in, bound to his memory and his soul. There was a seed sown which was quietly bursting the ground, and promised a harvest rich and full; and Willie will see it reaped at the last great day, when he will be by the side of the reapers, or rather himself be a sheaf in the great corn-field—the first sheaf of the field of Mr. Dobson's school. Happy Willie! *there* at the last day things will be real, and be seen as they are in their true light. Turton was not there; he was among those to whom Willie had spoken, and yet spoke.

"Well," said Crawshay, "now for my plan." He stood with his back to the fire, and Dance sat on the edge of the old ragged sofa, on the elbow; Stocker had his hands in his pockets, and stood against the wall opposite, with his chin out, and his head thrown back under a picture-frame, which he lifted up and down every now and then, to the great discomfort of an old spider, who had brought up fifteen families there in a web undisturbed, and had trophies of flies' wings hung round his ancient wall of moths and gnats gone by. Tricketts sat on the table, and listened to the profound Crawshay; while he, with a small whip in his hand, slashed the outside of his right leg ever and anon with heavy blows; his hair well arranged; his coat, a green cut-away, with brass buttons covered with foxes' heads. He was a good-looking fellow, and decidedly clever.

"I propose—"

"We'll have no cruelty," said Dance, with a very odd expression of face and voice, which seemed to show that a shadow of Willie passed softly and quietly over his soul, and made him remember the last summoning in that room, and that dying hour.

"Well, don't disturb a fellow; can't you hear a fellow

“speak? I wasn’t going to say anything except what is worthy of a gentleman and a Christian.”

This speech soothed every conscience in the room, the most rugged.

“Hear, hear,” said Stocker.

“I propose that we form a counter club to the *αριστοι*; an opposition in the lower school, based on opposition and liberal principles.”

“Capital!” said Dance, looking round.

“First-rate!” said Stocker, letting the frame go with a slap against the wall, on which the ancestral spider died.

“Jolly!” said Tricketts, from the table.

“Stunning!” said Lawson, springing up and suddenly sitting down, while the torn corner of the old sofa suddenly puffed out and subsided, like an exhausted balloon.

“The difficulty is the name,” said Crawshay.

“‘What’s in a name?’” said Trickett, who had a turn for poetry, and had put several lines to memory when with his aunt at Dorking.

“It has struck me that some name having reference to the *αριστοι* might do,” said Crawshay; “what do you say to ‘*optimi*?’”

“Don’t like it,” said Stocker.

“What do you say to the ‘stunners?’” said Lawson.

“Capital! first rate!” said Dance, springing from the sofa on the back of Crawshay’s iron grey Scotch terrier, which lay on the ground.

The dog started up and howled to the door.

“I say, old fellow, take care,” said Crawshay, with suppressed annoyance. “Come here, Wretchos; poor old Wretchos. Well, I think ‘The Stunners’ will do; it sounds well. What do you all say?”

“First rate” was the universal cry. All hands were held up, and “The Stunners” was the name.

“Now, who shall be the members?”

“All who are here,” said Crawshay, “I propose.”

“Good! There are nine,” said Dance, “nine Stunners; that will do.”

Crawshay, Dance, Stocker, Trickett, Lawson, Hawkins, Perkins, Spurling, and Neale were the first Stunners.

“And now, what shall we do in opposition to the

αριστοι? Unity is strength. Let us act together and we shall overthrow the monopoly."

"Excellent! capital!" cried Stocker; "overthrow the αριστοι."

"The leaders first," said Crawshay, looking with a penetrating glance round the room, to see how they were prepared to accept his proposals. "There is an examination coming on, is there not?" said Crawshay.

"Yes."

"Basil is trying hard for the scholarship; eh?"

"Yes, hard; works hard all day."

"Good!" said the chairman of the Stunners.

"Now, I propose we run him hard; there's his wound; touch him in the sore; we'll not do much harm, but right the school, and show the fellow up, who has the impudence to rule it: show him up: let them see through him: floor him at the examination, and bring him down a peg in old Dobson's estimation, and in Talbot's; and so free him from his shackles, and set the school right."

The power and eloquence of this proposal was received unanimously.

Dance, at last, pulling his under-lip with his finger, said, "Don't be cruel."

"Oh, no," said Crawshay, "we'll do no harm. Oh, we did a thing of the same sort to a fellow at the last school I was at, and it answered admirably. Did no one any harm; brought the fellow down to his knees, and righted the whole school."

"Well, but suppose Basil should lose the scholarship by any of our devices, it may hurt the fellow," said Neale, who was sitting in the chair, pulling the ears of Wretchos, which was standing on his hind legs between his legs.

"Oh, humbug! hurt him! no, it's his own fault if he breaks with the mild treatment I propose. I want to see what the fellow is made of."

Crawshay was clever and wily. He saw the need of a decided and able move to undermine the influence of Talbot, Basil, and that set. Basil's ruin was clearly and cleverly planned in his mind, and with it he saw the downfall of the "Methodist" party in the school. He

did not at that moment wish his full plans and intentions sifted, for he had formed his Ironsides, whom he knew he could lead where he would, and who would scarcely have the wit to penetrate his designs.

"Let us break up now for the evening," said Crawshay. "The Stunners meet again to-morrow."

"Jolly!" said Stocker; "let us break up merry. What do you say to a weed and a sedative?"

"Done," said Crawshay: and the members of the Stunners retired to rest that night, elated with hope, strengthened by co-operation, and led by a captain who promised every prospect of success.

CHAPTER XIV.

ENGLISH VERSE.

WITH the examination for the scholarship, which was tried for some time before the successful candidate could enter on residence, was the giving away prizes for the English verse on the Linklater foundation. The subject was for ever, "The Monument, and a hundred yards round it." Wimpkins was trying this year: these are the first lines, which only Brooke had seen, who, strange to say, was chief friend to Wimpkins. He declared them stunning, and he couldn't for the life of him see the difference between them and any of Pope's Homer.

"High o'er the roofs the stately column rose,
Instance of London's gratitude and woes,
When London merchants saw the midnight blaze,
Gleaming more brightly than meridian rays."

"Bravo!" said Brooke; "first-rate; no one could beat that—impossible!"

Wimpkins whimpered extremely, and blushed, and looked down, and pulled his ring.

"Oh, yes, easily: Basil could—he's so clever. I'm glad

you like it, very. Just down here there are a few lines which I think are on the whole the best, if men may decide on their own works; they know the whereabouts of their own minds. Shall I read them? or perhaps you will, eh?" for poor, Wimpkins saw that Brooke had his hand on the handle of the door, and was in a desperate fidget to be off.

"Ay, ay, there's a good fellow; another time I shall enjoy it of all things; it's first-rate; I say, first-rate—capital! 'merchants all in a blaze'—what is it, eh? gridiron rays—oh, what on earth is it? something like that; first-rate! You'll have it, old fish, as sure as I am Brooke." And he was gone.

Poor Wimpkins! but, never mind; Dr. Johnson heard Goldsmith's first reading, and was a little brusque. All great authors must have little rebuffs from literary friends; perhaps it's jealousy.

"Ah! perhaps it is," said Wimpkins, reading aloud his best lines with pathos, and with this encouragement locked it up in his desk.

Here was Brooke's effort. After hearing Wimpkins's, he determined to try, seized with a poetical *furor*. Pulteney looked over it, and Brooke stood by. Brooke felt doubtful about getting it, but still was sanguine.

"Ye lofty pillar, startling all the clouds."

"My dear fellow, 'ye' is plural."

"Oh, but you know, I'm not writing grammar; I'm doing verse."

"Well, but we must have grammar; eh? And then, too, 'startling' the clouds; that's odd: isn't it?"

"Yes, but all poetry's odd."

"Well, there's some truth in that," said Pulteney, humming: "suppose we leave it—

"Thou lofty pillar pointing to the clouds."

"I don't like it so much; but, never mind, leave it."

"Now then for the next line:

"And nearly toppling o'er below the crowds."

"Well, but there's something odd, I think; isn't there, in the 'below the crowds'? You can't quite say the pillar is *below* the crowds."

"No, no; oh dear, no; I don't mean that. It means 'the crowds below;' only, you see, 'below' won't rhyme with 'clouds.' And I knew it was lawful and rather a beauty to reverse words in poetry; so I did."

"Well, you can hardly do it here: it's hardly sense."

"Oh, no! I knew that I was not writing sense; I'm writing *verse*. You don't seem to see."

"Well," said Pulteney, musingly, and drawing a portrait of the Duke of Wellington on his thumb nail. "I don't see how to improve this line much, certainly. Well:—

"Thou lofty pillar, startling all the clouds,
And nearly toppling o'er below the crowds,
Frown like a forehead o'er the tiny Thames—"

"Hem! I don't know; the Thames is hardly 'tiny': is it?"

"No: but then it's for the alliteration, which you know is so beautiful a figure in poetry. You see I have it twice in one line."

"Yes, I see: 'frown like a forehead:' that's a curious simile; isn't it?"

"Oh, I thought that was such an original idea."

"Well, so it is. Let us go on:

"Frown like a forehead o'er the tiny Thames,
Laugh like gems."

"Why, you've left out all the middle of the line."

"Oh, yes; I didn't know what to say there. I bothered over it for a quarter of an hour, and I couldn't; so I kept the chief part, you know, the rhyme, and left the middle to be filled up after the prize is decided. If I get it, you know, I can easily do it then."

"Well, *if*," said Pulteney, smiling. "But, 'gems': why 'gems'?"

"Oh, only because it rhymes with 'Thames.'"

"Oh, ay, let us get on:—

"Thou lofty pillar, startling all the clouds,
And nearly toppling o'er below the crowds,
Frown like a forehead o'er the tiny Thames,
Laugh like gems."

"How well it reads," said Brooke. "I had no idea it would read so well. Capital! so flowing!"

"Very," said Pulteney; "very; only that last line."

"Oh, don't be so critical; it so discourages one," said Brooke, rather vexed.

"One line out of four, you know, to leave its sense broken, is rather— But go on:"

"Where once a fire blazed you stand a stone,
And look like Buonaparte all alone."

"Eh, like Napoleon? I don't see the aptness of the simile of the Monument to Buonaparte."

"Oh, well, it's this: I was so struck with a print of Buonaparte at S. Helena on the rock, he looked so lonely; so I thought I couldn't give an idea which so expressed loneliness."

"Well, there's something in that; but why Buonaparte? it is not spelt with a 'y.'"

"No, it's spoken so, though."

"Yes."

"Merchants, bakers, butchers, millinés,
Dealers in buttons and in foreign furs,
Are congregated all."

"But that first line's odd."

"Yes, of course, as you read it, but you read it so badly; for see, I've put a mark over the 'és' in millinés to lay a stress on it. That's lawful in poetry; Shakespeare often does it."

"Yes, that's true; but why all these trades mentioned?"

"Why how critical you are, it's so discouraging; you know the subject is 'The Monument, and fifty yards round it,' and that is so narrow a compass. I spent a day in going to see all the shops, like a man who travels to write a book."

"Well, that's honest."

"Let us read again."

"Thou lofty pillar, startling all the clouds,
And nearly—"

"Oh, now do—"

"What—what's the matter?"

"Oh, I thought you were going to stop to make a remark; and it does so spoil it to stop and make remarks. I'd rather you'd leave any mistake in any line."

"Well, I wasn't going to stop."

"Oh, I thought you were. Go on."

"Thou lofty pillar, startling all the clouds,
And nearly toppling o'er below the crowds,
Frown like a forehead o'er the tiny Thames,
Laugh like.....gems.
Where once a fire blazed, you stand a stone,
And look like Buonaparty all alone;
Merchants, bakers, butchers, millinér's,
Dealers in buttons and in foreign furs,
Are congregated all."

"Well, really," said Brooke, the hot tear swelling in his eye; "really you know it is—it is—well, I was going to say, you know, beautiful—quite beautiful. I don't want to praise myself, but I never thought I *should* be a poet; but an old aunt of mine who's dead did once say so."

"Well, but my dear fellow, this isn't all?"

"Oh, yes it is."

"All?"

"Yes, it was to be short, you know, confined to a few lines; so I thought the shorter the better."

"In one sense that's true; but still it is *very* short."

"Yes, but think of 'Milman's Apollo,' how short that is, and how we admire it! Terseness is a beauty, you know."

"Yes, but this is very terse; and then, too, brevity is not always terseness."

"No, but you know I felt, if shortness is a virtue, it couldn't be too short."

"Well."

"Well, what do you think? shall I get it?"

"Oh, you *may*."

"Ah, there you're so beastly discouraging. That's always the way with coming to you clever fellows; but I don't care."

Here was Basil's.

"Thou sad memorial of a day gone by,
When London's sin ascending to the sky
Called down the vengeance of an angry God,
And thousands sank beneath the fiery rod.
And the broad Thames illumined by the flame,
With blood-red billow to the ocean came,
Laden with tidings of the awful fire,
And scared the sea-bird with the story dire.
Would that e'en now thy monumental stone
Could speak where sinners rave and mourners groan,
In crowded garret and in cellar dread,
The sons of London lie on sorrow's bed." &c.

"Well, that's not so bad," said Trevelyan, letting his glass fall from his eye as he finished it. "Yes, that strikes me as good; I couldn't do it, I'm sure."

CHAPTER XV.

ALLEY.

"Ballachulish, N. B.

"SIR,—Having heard much of your academy, and understanding that your terms are reasonable, I propose, with your permission, to send a youth to place under your charge. He has no parents and no known relatives. His expenses will be punctually paid by Messrs. Cragie and Marshall, tobacconists, Holborn, to whom I must refer you for reference. The half-year will be always payable in advance. The boy's name is Alley, by which single name he had better go. He must be with you in the capacity of a parlour boarder, as he cannot return in vacations, having no home to go to after his education

is complete, which we hope will be the case in three years from the date of this. He will then enter Cragie and Marshall's firm as an apprentice. I should add, the lad is thirteen, rather peculiar in appearance and mind, but I believe him to be, on the whole, well-principled and intelligent.

"I remain your very obedient servant,
"EZRA MCCLOUD."

This singular letter reached Mr. Dobson's the morning after Crawshay's arrival. Mr. Dobson made the necessary inquiries, and they were satisfactory; so he waited the arrival of Alley. The fact was announced in the school, and the name in its solitary simplicity awoke some little amusement.

A few mornings after Mr. Dobson was aroused from his breakfast-table by seeing a small figure come up his avenue. The figure kept looking behind, and seemed that of a boy whose aim was the school-door. A ragged little fellow was presently seen coming up in the rear, with a large box on his shoulder corded round. It was one of those boxes which we used to use in old days, papered like a room on the outside, with a convex top, half trunk, half bandbox. The youth in front approached the door and rang the bell. It was Alley. Mr. Dobson and the servant came to the door to meet him. Basil and Talbot happened to be in the hall, and lingered to look at the new-comer.

His appearance was peculiar. The most remarkable features in his countenance were his eyes, which were wild and restless, beaming with intelligence and piercingly black; he was very plain; his cheeks actually sunk in hollows on either side; his hair was of the palest sandy brown; his thin upper lip pressed closely on his lower one gave an air of reserve and wilfulness to his face; his figure was very thin, and he was certainly short for a boy past thirteen; his dress was very plain, almost thread-bare, though it might be called cloth; an odd tartan cap on his head scarcely escaped the charge of being dirty; he wore no gloves, and his jacket sleeves were short; the

amount of worsted stockings which appeared between his shoes and the end of his trousers showed that he had outgrown the latter; an open collar displayed a neck more thin and lath-like than even his face.

"Oh, let me see," said Mr. Dobson, "you are the young gentleman from Messrs. Cragie and Marshall's, tobacconists, and your name, I think, is—bless me, I forget the name, it is such an odd one—Sally, isn't it you call it?"

"Will you please to show me who is the master here?" said Alley, addressing the foot-boy, entirely passing by Mr. Dobson, who by no means was flattered by the mistake.

The boy snivelled and grinned but said nothing.

"Oh, I remember now," said Mr. Dobson; "it's Alley. Let me see, are you Master Alley?" said he, going up to the new-comer.

"They call me Alley," said he, eyeing Mr. Dobson from head to foot. "Are you the master then?"

"Yes," said Mr. Dobson: "and I hope we soon shall be better friends, my little man."

Alley gave him another long stare that indicated either suspicion or difficulty of understanding.

At this time the boy had put down the box upon the ground.

"There is ten pence I promised you," said Alley, putting the ten coppers into the boy's hand.

The boy bowed and was retiring, and Alley was following Mr. Dobson, when suddenly he turned round. "Oh, I remember," said he, "Mr. Marshall told me that I was to give a shilling for carrying my luggage."

"Tenpence is quite enough," said Mr. Dobson.

"Oh, but stop," said Alley, rushing to the door and calling the boy back, and putting the twopence into his hand, while a sudden and rapid brilliance lit up his eyes. "There," said he, "you have my last penny, boy, but I have not broken my word. Are there many boys at this school?" going straight up to Basil and accosting him without introduction. "Are there many bullies here? I like your look. I'll be your friend. I don't like the look of that boy next you," said he, eyeing Talbot: "he looks proud."

Talbot evidently could not help himself, and so took it quietly.

"Yes, I'll be your friend," said Basil, whose good-natured heart was always full of sympathy for the friendless and the stranger. "Now let us get your box upstairs into your room."

"Oh, that is so kind of you," said Alley. "Look here," said he, lowering his voice to a whisper to Basil's ear, "I can't give you anything, for I am a beggar, but I'll do something for you, something that will help you, that you may depend on. I always stick to those who are kind to me, don't you see?" said he, seizing hold of Basil's arm with his hand, looking with such excited earnestness into his face, that Basil thought he was fairly mad.

But by this time Basil had got hold of the box, and was conveying it into Alley's room.

"Sit down," said Alley, as soon as he had reached it and placed himself on his corded box; "and tell me what kind of place this is."

"Where do you come from?" said Basil; "where is your home?"

"The sea and the mountains and the seagull's nest," said Alley, while his eye fired up with the same excitement he had shown before.

"Who are your friends?" said Basil.

"Sandie the smuggler and Donald the fisherman: they always called me the Sea-child," looking suddenly round at the window.

"No, but I mean your own relations," said Basil.

"I've none," said Alley, letting his eyes sink on the ground.

Basil was afraid he had hurt him, and was sorry.

"Old Sandie the smuggler used to say the sea was my cradle and the seagull's nest my toy. Are there any seagulls or rocks here?" said he, looking quickly round at Basil.

"No," said the other, "we are a long way from the sea here."

"Are the boys bullies here?" again asked Alley. "I am afraid of boys," said he; "I've been so little used to them."

"Oh, don't be afraid," said Basil; "I'll take care of you."

"If there were rocks and sea here, I would take care of you," said Alley.

Alley was alone. His box, which was his all, was with him, and the little fellow seated himself on it, and mused on what his future life would be, and what kind of beings those were, among whom he had come. Ever and anon a shade of sadness crossed his peculiar features. Basil, whose disposition was a sympathising one, studied his new friend with interest, and conceived already a romantic attachment for him. He longed to dive into his thoughts and feelings; so he returned and resumed his conversation.

"Shall you not go home in the holidays?" asked he
"they say you are to be a parlour boarder."

"No," said Alley; "I have no home."

"No home?" said Basil; "who, then, are your friends?"

"I don't know," said Alley, "except those I told you."

"Had you never a father that you saw?"

"No, never; he and mother died when I was a bairn :
at least so I was always told by Sandie."

"Who's Sandie?"

"I told you—the smuggler."

"Oh, yes. What, then, did he bring you up?"

"He and Clifelt : old Clifelt has done most for me."

"Why can't you go and see them these holidays?"

"Because it would cost money, and I have none, nor
they either."

"Why did they send you so far from them to school?"

"Because they want me to get my learning, to go into
the shop in London."

"Do you like it?"

"I must," said the child of poverty and adversity.

"Oh," said Basil, thoughtfully; "I am sorry."

"Are you?" said Alley; "that's odd."

"Why, I don't like your never going home for holidays."

"Old Clifelt said I should not find many to care for
me when I went into the world."

"Did he?" said Basil, thoughtfully, getting a good
deal interested in his young friend.

"And so did Sandie say. But, never mind; I want to go to-bed."

Basil went away, and Alley was left alone in his room. His corded box was in the middle, the scanty furniture round the walls; the window was shut. He threw it open, and gazed out into the dark starlight of the night sky. He leant gazing out for half an hour, without speaking; and as Talbot and Basil were walking on the terrace below, they saw him.

"Strange fellow, that new boy," said Basil.

"Ay, I was going to ask you about him," answered Talbot. "I saw you had taken him up: it's so like you, Basil, to take a new fellow up. And pray, then, is there so much in him?"

Basil laughed. "Well, it is like me, I grant; but I really think there is something very singular about this fellow: he's so extraordinary in his views of life, I should like to see what he will turn out. I am afraid he will be horribly bullied by the bad set; he's so curious and strange."

"I hate bullying," said Talbot. "I wish we could give a check to it; but I suppose it would only be worse in the end. This new fellow Crawshay won't improve matters; he's clever, and I'm afraid bad. Dance and the others are full sail after him."

"And Willie's death thrown away," said Basil, sadly.

"No, no," said Talbot; "that, too, is just like you, Basil—not thrown away, you may rely on it. No bread cast on the water will be lost, though it takes many days to come to shore: at least, I can answer for that child's death having left a seed which God sowed there, to grow, to throw its shade of Himself on me through the remainder of my days."

"I was," said Basil, "I was wrong; but they don't seem much altered."

"Three of the old set I never see with Dance now, and two of them are a good deal modified; and who can say what temptations are daily resisted by the very worst, who would be far worse if it had not been for those blessed checks his death caused? No, Basil, we must not judge according to our own rule and standard; we may

not. God's ways are not our ways; and half the good in the world is spoilt by expecting too much."

Basil was struck with the truth and good sense of Talbot's remarks; they were the words of soberness and truth. But it was getting late; Alley had shut down his window, and the two friends went into their respective rooms.

Morning came, and all the boys had assembled in the playground—*αριστοι*, stunners, unattached, fags—all, with the exception of one or two of the elder ones, among whom were Talbot and Basil. Some questions were asked about the new fellow who had come yesterday, and some interest expressed about his appearance. At length he came: Alley opened the door of the yard, and entered alone. In a moment a crowd was round him, with all the usual questions—What's your name? what's your father? what school were you at before? how much tin have you brought? what are you going to be? &c. These questions once answered, came usually the important decision of a "jolly fellow" or "a fool."

Alley stared, bewildered by the surrounding scene, and gave no answer.

"Your name, sir?" said Stocker, in a bullying and determined tone.

Alley's colour fell; his lip quivered; his first view seemed to have been to refuse or to question their authority. "Alley," he said.

"Alley what?" cried two or three voices.

"I was called Alley by the fishermen at home, and Alley the Sea-child, by Sandie," said the boy, after some delay; and immediately a roar of laughter followed.

"No, but your surname?" said Stocker: "we want your surname."

"I have none," said the terrified child, who now fairly became frightened by the increasing roar and clamour around him.

"No surname! why, he's not a human being," cried Crawshay, who had just come up; "he'll be elected among the *αριστοι*," said he, putting his glass to his eye, and scrutinising the boy accurately.

"Pulteney, do come here," cried Trevelyan, who had

just lounged into the playground: "here is one of those anthropophagi or griffins, which old Homer described; here's a fellow without a name, with no lineage: do come and look." And Pulteney was induced to leave a book he was reading to come and look.

The interest had now become universal, and the pressure and clamour of the boys great; but Alley said nothing—nothing could draw anything further from his lips. He stood and stared on this side and that, as if simply hesitating from which side the attack was likely to come, or on which he should make his escape.

"Let's toss him," was the cry, and the suggestion seemed highly popular.

"You'll be tossed in a blanket in the school-yard," said Crawshay, "if you don't give me your surname, sir? Come, speak!"

But the more imminent became the pressure, the more scared the new boy looked and the closer fixed were his lips.

"Very well, then," said Crawshay, "it's fair play; he has a good chance, but he won't use it: so now for it—five minutes to settle, and that's all."

The boys rushed off shouting and howling for the blanket, and Alley stood motionless and pale. There was nothing in one line of his face that showed firmness, or the power to resist; his eye seemed to quiver in its socket. He stood, grasping at something in his pocket, and chucking it up and down with his hidden fingers, and looking from one side to the other, with his head turning as he looked with a movement and expression which was almost ludicrous.

"Now, then, old fellow, bed's ready," said Stocker; "time to go to bed." And he advanced to lay hold of the terrified boy.

The blanket was laid out, and crowds of hands sought an honoured place along its hem.

"Now, my dear," said Stocker, laying hold of Alley by the collar.

"I'd rather not," said Alley, hardly whispering with emotion and alarm.

"Come to Nurse Stocker," said the boy, seizing hold of his trembling victim.

Alley faintly struggled, but in vain ; he was thrown into the blanket, and ascended through mid air with velocity. Yells of delight and ecstasy broke from the groups around, as over and over again the alarmed child was jerked up in his awful and uneasy bed.

Talbot and Basil appeared.

"Stop that!" cried Talbot, in a voice which compelled all to listen.

Basil, infuriated at the scene, dashed at Stocker, and struck him to the ground.

"A fight! a fight!" was the cry, and in a moment all had gathered round the combatants, while Alley was left, bruised and sobbing, on the ground.

"I'll fight for him with any one of you," cried Basil, preparing to strip. "You are a set of brutes; you killed one boy, and you are going to murder another."

"My dear, what's the matter?" said Crawshay, coming up: "perhaps you'd favour me with a round."

"Anyone," said Basil, whose generous spirit would gladly have sacrificed itself for the cause of the injured. Besides, he had pledged his word to defend and aid Alley, and he had honestly meant it.

There is no telling what would have happened had not Mr. Dobson entered, and peace was restored. Alley was removed to his room.

The next day Alley had a character in the school. He had shown no resentment, for he had not spirit enough ; he came crouching into the school, and offered to pick up Stocker's pen which had fallen, and called him "sir," as he gave it him ; and asked Crawshay what he could do for him. In proportion as any boy had been foremost yesterday, in that proportion Alley smiled at him, watched his face, offered to do anything for him ; and Basil and Talbot, and a few of the younger ones who had pitied him yesterday, he passed without notice, and seemed willing to join in any laugh which was raised at their expense, rather than appear to be connected with them.

"It's done him good, the little sheep," said Stocker to his companion, as they sat at the desk doing a Latin exercise.

"He's a poor fool," said Crawshaw.

"Well, I was never so disappointed and surprised in my life!" said Basil; "I really thought the boy had a great deal of originality and spirit."

"Well, I never thought much of him," said Talbot; "he seemed to me very strange and odd."

Alley had gained his character in two days: he was called cowardly, mean, ungenerous; a fellow who would tremble before a leaf, and be frightened at a fly. The whole school formed one view of him, and no one disputed it; they at once ceased bullying, for there was no spirit to crush. His mean cringing to the worst characters in the school; his willingness to laugh at his best friends; his jokes about his own terrors; his joining the laugh of those who laughed at the recollection of his figure in the blanket, simply alienated every friend, without softening one enemy; and Alley, the nameless, sunk into contempt and ignominy in the school.

Two days passed away, and every hour confirmed the view of his character. Once, Basil for an instant wavered. He overtook Alley, standing in the little copse; the boy was singing, or rather shouting, and that so wildly and singularly, as he stood gazing up into a tree whose long boughs were bending in a roaring wind, that he could not help stopping and watching him. He had never seen so strange an attitude: his whole soul seemed thrown into it; energy, character, and power were expressed in each movement; and the wild sounds of his voice as he shouted his strange song, and then paused to listen to the echo, and then laughed and clapped his hands with delight and ecstasy, made the scene most extraordinary. It was twilight, and the boy's figure stood out against the pale yellow of the distant sky, black and distinct, as if he were holding converse with some one in the distant glow, or directing some mystic procession which was moving along in the distance. A bat whirled three times round his head, and each time Alley whirled his cap and arm round after it, as if to stay its flight. Basil moved away unperceived.

"That boy's no fool," said he, as he walked home musingly. "How very odd it is!"

The next day Basil passed Alley as he was walking down the terrace to school. "Well, Alley," he said, "how do you get on? how do you like the school?"

Alley walked quickly and awkwardly, as if some eye was on him of the other clique. "Oh, very much, very much," said he, as he passed by as if wishing to avoid Basil.

Basil had meant to be kind, and tried to get over the odd impression which Alley had already given. He went into the school as the bell had rung, and Basil followed. As Alley passed up the room, Stocker struck him, and Dance gave him another blow; Alley cowered beneath the blows, and turning round, laughed at his own discomfiture, and immediately made up to his two persecutors as if they were his greatest friends.

"Look at that fool Basil," said Stocker; "I long to see him put down, he is so proud and conceited; I hope Crawshaw will be the death of him."

"Ha! ha!" cried Alley, from sheer terror willing to join in any attack on his generous protector, rather than run the risk of offending those whom he dreaded so much more.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SEA-CHILD.

A FEW weeks after the events above described, Mr. Dobson announced to his boys that he intended letting the school have a day at the sea; an event which occurred about twice a year, as it lay not more than fifteen miles from the school, and was a favourite resort of the boys whenever they could get a holiday long enough. On this occasion all were to go. Some carts in the village were hired to convey them, and the day was looked forward to with great delight.

The morning was fine, and the expedition, with bathing and boating in view, and a picnic on the sand, engaged every attention. The beach was large and flat, except in

one point, where a gigantic rock rose a prodigious height above the sand, forming a small gulf, which had been worn out by the surge. This sandy beach was the spot to which the boys always resorted. Two small boats quietly lay anchored there, belonging to fishermen who lived hard by, and the dry and broad sand around offered a good place for bathing and swimming. To this point as usual they at once repaired.

The day was stormy, and the sea birds were driving inland in pursuit of fish, which the stormy sky and wind were driving to the bosom of the rocks. Boating was difficult, but the water got quieter about the middle of the afternoon, and four of the boys proposed to go out in a boat. Basil was fond of boating, and he and Pulteney, Brooke and Trevelyan, determined on taking one of the fishermen's, which lay near, and to venture on the sea. Talbot hesitated as to advising them to go, for though the wind had grown calmer and quieter, the sea was very disturbed, and he felt great doubt as to whether the stormy state of the weather might not return in two or three hours; but they were bent upon it, and Basil sprang into the boat, the others following. Pulteney was a capital boatman, and was looking forward to the boat-races at Oxford. The four were soon off, and the first swell carried them some distance from the shore. Several of the boys had gathered round the little bay to see them start, and others were wandering far and wide in search of shells and seaweed. A few loiterers paused to see the boat dash off. Talbot was standing on a rock, near the starting-place, and was watching the little vessel making its way across the waves. The boys presently hoisted a sail, and Brooke's stout figure was seen unfurling it.

"I wish they had not done that," said Talbot, aloud to himself. "I am sure they are not aware that the sky looks very squally, and yonder clouds in the west look full of wind." He held his hand up to his eyebrows as he spoke and looked anxiously at the struggling vessel.

Two boys came sauntering up along the shore, dragging seaweed and walking lazily with their eyes fixed on the little boat.

"I say, old fellow, they're plucky."

"Too plucky by half," said Talbot, in a musing tone, and his eyes fixed on the boat.

"I wish with all my heart, I had urged them not to go."

"They will be in for it," said O'Bryan. "Oh, do look there, how she dipped then. The wind's getting up along the rocks there, and the breakers show their white feathers a long way out to sea."

"Yes," said Talbot, "I said so; I fully expected it."

"I say, young master," said the voice of a fisherman, who came quickly down over the shingles, with a brown tanned face, and earrings in his ears, and a shrimp-basket behind him; "those young'uns shouldn't have gone out to-day. Who's with 'em?"

"No one," said Talbot. "Do you think there's danger?"

"Danger? yes, if they are all alone. The wind's getting squally, and we shall have a desperate night of it."

"Call them," said Talbot, in great alarm. "Could you make them hear?"

The fisherman smiled. The wind had now risen very high, and the waves were dashing in the wildest way up the beach. No number of voices in full chorus could be heard one-twentieth part of the distance at which the boat was.

"What shall we do?" said Talbot, looking round with a despairing and entreating look to the fisherman, who was looking out to the sea evidently with great anxiety.

The wind now roared up the caverns to the rocks, and the waves plunged in terrible harmony.

"It has got far worse since they started," said Talbot.

"It's the rocks I'm afraid of, more than the wind," said the fisherman in an anxious tone.

By this time a number of the boys had gathered round the spot. Small groups came in from behind the reef of rocks where they had been for some time searching after their various sea treasures. All eyes were fixed on the labouring vessel, which moved up and down with the heaving billow. The sky grew rapidly darker, and the evening set in with a rapidity which stormy

weather alone produces. All on shore grew exceedingly terrified. The hour for return was past already, and Talbot, who felt responsible for the rest, grew very uneasy as to what would be felt at home.

"I can't see the boat at all," said he; "now it grows darker: it seems like a speck on the sea, and I can't tell whether it is coming or going."

"It would need a sharp eye to see, if he had the sight of a giant, on a night like this," said the fisherman. "It's murky enough for a seagull to go blind in. If only I could get a sight of her, I think we might do something towards helping them."

"Where could we get a sight of her?" cried Talbot in despair.

"No chance except up the cliff there," said the fisherman, "and the tide's coming in so fast that I don't know who would run the risk of climbing it. It is very hard in the daytime, but it's dreadfully dangerous in the night. It's so steep that a man would be dashed to pieces if he attempted to climb it."

"Will you not try?" said Talbot, in a voice which shook with emotion and anxiety.

"Impossible, quite," said the fisherman, still looking out to the sea. "I can't see 'em any longer," said he, "the night grows awful."

At this moment, while the little company had crowded together on a small reef of rocks, around which the waters of the tide were advancing, a loud cry, which rose high and shrill above the noise of winds and waters, struck on their ears. All looked round. On the most precipitous edge of the cliff, in the most dangerous part, stood or rather clung the form of a boy. His cap was in his hand, and he was waving it round his head, and with the other hand was clinging to the sharp edge of the precipice. His feet seemed literally standing on nothing. Two seagulls were floating round his head, and when for a moment the wind blew away the clouds from the rocks, his hair was seen blowing from his brow like gossamers.

"It's Alley," cried Talbot.

"It's Alley," rose simultaneously from all present.

It was Alley.

"He's a bold'un," said the fisherman, gazing in astonishment. "I swear none but a real fisherman's boy or a smuggler would do that. He must be almost more than human to do that in a night like this."

All gazed for a minute in astonishment. Alley, the shrinking, trembling coward, whom everyone despised and every boy in the school had cause to think of as more than half a fool!

"He sees 'em, he hails 'em back; I think I hear their cry," said the fisherman.

There was a lull in the roar of the wind for a moment, and in that lull there came what did sound like a loud and bitter cry; but all eyes were fixed on Alley. The boy's head was thrown back as if he was straining every nerve to see something far away, and with the most painful strain keeping up his hand in the effort to make signals. The party on the beach was breathless. No eyes were turned to the direction of the boat; all were fixed on Alley. He had begun his awful descent. The breathless astonishment of the company was broken every now and then by a sob of surprise, as the daring boy placed his foot on some new ledge of the cliff. His hands caught everything which they could hold to. Twice the soil gave way, and his head fell back, and a cloud of dust came showering down with fragments of broken rock on the beach below. The figure of Alley bent back as if no earthly power could save him, but he seemed able to cling with his very breast to the cliff. Sometimes he bent back his head to look up at an object above him, and having seen or ascertained it, he returned his head to its former posture and made another grapple with his hand. At length he reached the bottom.

All rushed towards him, but the boy seemed as little to heed them as the rock which he had left. Of course he was a hero now—more than a hero—no one greater had ever been at the school; but now his conduct perplexed them all still more. He rushed through them, striking one of them to the earth and bursting headlong through every obstacle, he dashed to the fisherman, who stood by nearly as surprised as the others.

"Your boat!" said Alley, in a tone of the keenest energy. His clear and piercing black eye, his pale face, his floating black hair, his bare bosom, and tightly drawn dress, his handkerchief tied loosely round his neck, his determined firmness of manner; as if born to command and to rule the waves—all gave him a most extraordinary appearance. "Your boat!" continued he.

"The boat?" said the fisherman, as if rousing from a dream. "It's there, if the waves haven't broke the ropes and anchor away; but you're never going out to-night in a boat, among the breakers, my young master; it'll be simple death to-night. You might as well have hurled yourself from yonder rock."

"Only, only give me the boat," cried Alley, with an earnestness and decision which would take no refusal.

"You sha'n't go in a boat of mine," said the fisherman.

"Alley, you must not," said Talbot.

Alley looked round in despair. His eye rested on the boat which lay anchored and fastened on the shore. He flew to it desperately, dashing by the fisherman and Talbot, who both tried to hold him.

"Let him go," said the fisherman: "may be if he has seen his way, he'll find it."

Words of remonstrance or advice were in vain: Alley was gone, and had already sprung into the boat, had torn the chain from the rocks, and the tiny vessel was already bending and lurching on the reeling waves. All shut their eyes with a kind of instinctive horror, except the fisherman, who stood gazing in surprise. Every now and then he spoke in an under-tone to himself, making reflections on the boy. Every other roll of the tremendous waves, the boat was lost to view. The figure of Alley was seen each time the boat appeared. He sat on the bench and pulled the two oars with his whole might. His shirt blew open with the wind, and his handkerchief was rent from his neck, and floated to Talbot's feet. They thought the boat was gone, as a tremendous wave sent it down to the valley beneath, and the high angry billow dashed over the bow, as if in judgment on the reckless boy-mariner. Wind, rain, darkness, the frightful gleams of the waves, the roar of the surge, all conspired to make the scene tremendous.

Undaunted, brave, and fearless, Alley stood the storm. He looked like one born for winds and waves. When Alley had gone some way out, he saw the boat labouring still mid the waters; but the boys had given up all effort and had abandoned their oars and rudder. They had lost all hope. Basil had consigned himself to earnest prayer. His hands were clasped on his knees; his face hung down; his hair streamed with water; he was trying to imagine meeting God. Pulteney was kneeling in the crazy vessel, which heaved up and down with violent emotion. He too was trying to pray, but his agony of fear prevented him; he could not; his eyes were wild and fixed. Trevelyan sat in mute despair at the helm of the boat, staring around him with wildness and horror,—now looking at Basil astonished at his greater composure, and then staring at the huge billows which came rolling over their heads, as if to swallow them up.

Brooke was every now and then seizing the oar, and entreating them to help him in making one more effort for their lives.

"Cheer up, old fellows, do," said he; "I fancy I can see the land, where we can get in if we pull hard—if the good God will have mercy upon us. Come, dear old fellows, do," said he, in a bold affectionate manner.

Pulteney's teeth chattered.

"Oh, Brooke, Brooke! near land, did you say? Do, do save us if you can! I will give you all, all in the wide world I have!"

Brooke looked at him with something like scorn, and turned round again to the helm; the boat swerved, and creaked, and dashed, and swaggered, as if every moment her planks would part.

"Oh, my poor mother!" said Trevelyan, clasping his hands over his cold damp brow; "what will she do, what will she say!"

"Merciful God!" said Basil, "have mercy upon me, a sinner."

No words can describe the anguish painted on every face in the boat: the Judgment, with all its terrors, came before Basil's mind. How little he had as yet improved himself since Willie's death! and now to

have to die in a few minutes, this made religion a reality. The end came before them all with exceeding awe.

When, on a sudden, the form of Alley was seen above the billow, riding, like a creature born to rule the sea and the waves themselves, as calmly and fearlessly as if he rode a horse upon a plain.

"Here I am, thank God!" shouted Alley, at the top of his voice, above winds and waves; "Here I am, all right."

It is wholly impossible to imagine the radiant joy that broke over every face at this extraordinary and unexpected sight. Scarcely had Alley's boat reached them, when their boat gave an awful swerve and staggered on a rock; the timbers, already loosened, gave way, and all were swimming or floating on the water. A few moments of agonised effort, and Alley had picked all up, and taken them in, and his boat was fast making for shore.

They landed. Alley sprang out last; all were safe, all saved by him. The boys rushed round him; every mind, even of Basil and his companions, was lost in the one absorbing thought of Alley. He stood on a small rock and gazed around him, his restless eye sought out the fisherman.

"I've brought your boat back safe," said he.

The fisherman stepped forward.

"Gentlemen," said he, "forgive a poor man for speaking, but I've been along this coast for forty year, and managed boats in storm and gale, ah, and seen daring acts too, but never saw the like of this we've seen to-night: gentlemen, he's a boy to be proud of."

And so all felt; every hand was thrust forward, and to touch Alley's shirt sleeve, wet with sea-water, was at that moment a matter of the highest honour. Wet, jaded, tired, and worn, they all repaired to the fisherman's cottage. A message was quickly despatched to Mr. Dobson with the intelligence, but morning had broken before they returned home.

What a change for Alley! he was a hero now; none like him had ever been in the school in the boys' memory.

When he entered the school next morning, a burst of applause rang round the room, and his name was echoed from every lip: "Alley the Sea-child! bravo, Alley!"

CHAPTER XVII.

SCHOOLBOY RELIGION.

SUCH were Alley and Crawshay, the two new boys.

But a strong move was making against the *apostoi*, and especially Basil, and aided by so able a captain as Crawshay, it promised fair for success.

The examination drew on at the end of the summer quarter, and at the examination the scholarship was to be given away for the Oxford foundation. Basil had been trying hard for it; it was of the first importance to him: his means were small, and his friends only addressed him from a distance, and he saw nothing of them. To get the scholarship had long been the height of his desire; for this he had worked night and day, had given up days and weeks of play, and devoted all his powers and all his time. It was on this point, as I said above, that Crawshay, a clever and experienced general, intended to inflict his wound.

Basil was not naturally a hard-working boy, but he had a strong sense of duty, and though of an impulsive nature, did act under the sense of principle in the highest degree. He had set himself certain hours in the day for his walks with Talbot; he was very fond of them. In these they talked of Willie and of the various efforts they made for serving God and leading a better life: that event was fast passing away and settling down into the horizon; but still the further it went the clearer grew its outlines and its shape, and the light which glowed behind it became more and more intense and brilliant. Basil was always distressed with being so little able to feel it, and to make it still the conscious motive of his efforts. He had hoped that these highly wrought feelings of the dying hour would have remained; he had bathed in them and was growing disappointed because the soft, pure, clear waters were passing away behind him; he sometimes even disliked the remembrance of Willie's dying hour, and rather shunned than courted the scene which at first he thought he should ever

love; but sometimes it was otherwise; he could sometimes delight in it, and go and sit by his grave and think of him; and no doubt the influence on him had been thoroughly good, he had mastered faults and been more regular and disciplined in many lines of duty.

"I haven't been to Willie's grave these three weeks," said he to Talbot, as he was walking with his friend through a little wood where they had often been together. "I don't know how it is, I feel almost a disrelish for it, and yet I can't bear to say it or to think it, for I know I never thought of any thing so much as his dying hour. Do you ever go to it?"

"No, never. I never have since two days after his burial."

"You don't say so; but why not? I always feel, Talbot, you are the very essence of steadfastness and sensible religion."

"Well," said Talbot, smiling, "I am much obliged to you, but I never did care for that sort of thing."

"What sort of thing?"

"Going to graves," said Talbot. "I like to think of Willie at rest somewhere, having won what God meant to give him."

"How oddly you talk," said Basil; "not like the grave, and then to say he is somewhere? Why I always think of him whenever I think of him, so beautiful and—"

"And what?" said Talbot, gravely and quietly.

"Oh, I don't know," said the other, a little uncomfortably; "you are so strange."

"Am I?" said Talbot. "I can't help it, it's my way. I don't take things as you do; it would go against me to think of him in that sort of clear way that you do, because—because—"

"Because why?" said Basil, looking quickly round at Talbot, who was walking quietly on, having cleared his throat and was looking straight before him.

"Because I should sometimes not believe it was true, and then it would give me a feeling of unreality."

"What on earth is unreality? and what do you mean?" said Basil, astonished.

"Oh, I don't know; how you do bother me," said

Talbot, bending forward and leaping over a stile and then leaping back again; he came good-naturedly up and laying hold of Basil's shoulder said: "Oh, why we take things differently. I have never forgotten that child's death, and never shall; it made every thing more real to me, and I feel more honest and straightforward than I did, and more willing to give up my own will, and more humble I hope. But I do not think much of *him*, but the *thing*, the *thing*. There, Basil, now do have done with it; I have said now a great deal more than I meant, or like, or understand, but that's my way."

"Well," said Basil, a little vexed, "*I do not* quite understand you, you are rather puzzling to me; it seems a cold way of going to work. Still," said he musingly, "I believe, I am sure you are right—always right, Talbot; I wish I was like you, Talbot."

"Oh, Basil, you have done me far more good than I have you," said Talbot, quickly, "far more. I cannot tell you what I have learnt from your earnestness and feeling about religion."

"But my faults!" said Basil, with hesitation, and yet looking up with an eye full of delight to his friend.

"Dear Basil," said Talbot, smiling, "I haven't seen many of them."

"Not seen them?" said Basil. "Why you must see them every hour."

"Why *I* so peculiarly," said the other.

"Why because you are good, so honest, so straightforward, so consistent yourself, and I am so little so."

"Oh, Basil, don't let us go on," said Talbot; "I am not what you think me, although, God knows, I wish I were. Let us work for God more, and the good of others, that is what Willie would have us do."

"So I have been thinking," said Basil; "I wish we did much more, we should look after new boys in the school more. It seems so sad to think how many must come up here so taken care of at home, and what scenes of vice they behold here!"

"The very thing I have been thinking of," said Talbot, "exactly. Now there's that strange boy, Alley, I am sure there must be something in that boy, only recollect the

scene at the sea; and then to see him crouch so beneath those wretched fellows with Crawshay, it's dreadful."

"Well, I have determined," said Basil, "I will try and draw him out, and if I can I will be his friend, if he will let me, I have been long thinking of it. Oh, Talbot, what a blessing it is to have some one at school to talk to about these things."

"Well, I must be off," said Talbot, "it's getting late, and you mean to go to read; good-bye, Basil!"

And the friends separated at the head of a glade in the little wood. Basil continued his stroll; he had a book under his arm, and he was determined to spend some time in reading. He had not gone far, before he heard a voice of some one in the wood, and drawing nearer he discovered it was some one shouting poetry out at the top of his voice; but though his voice rose louder and louder alternately, it was not without something sweet and melodious in it, and the words were by no means said without feeling. As he drew near he saw through the boughs of the trees Alley lying stretched on his back, his arms uplifted to the sky, and his eyes gazing up into the starlight above him; he seemed in his element, and the very birds appeared hardly to fear him, for two of them were perched on the sprays above him, and were singing their evening carol to the twilight.

Basil stood for a few moments, gazing at the strange boy, and wondering what could be the key which would unlock his mysterious character. At length he approached him, and drawing aside the boughs, called "Alley!" The boy started suddenly up, and seemed at once confused.

"What are you here for?" said Basil, in surprise.

"There's no harm, is there?" said Alley, in a tone of voice half frightened, and yet half wild, as if he would assert the right, if disputed.

"Why are you so strange?" said Basil to the boy: "why do you come here by yourself in this strange manner?"

"I don't know," said he; "mayn't I?"

"Oh, yes, you may, if you wish; but I can't understand you. I wish you would do more as other boys do, and I shall so like to be your friend."

"Do you care about me, then?" said Alley, suddenly looking at Basil.

"Yes, I do; you saved my life at the sea, and you acted nobly then; and I long to be your friend, if you would let me: but you are so odd."

"Ah," said he, sighing and gazing round him, "I have no home here; no one understands me. I wish you would teach me, and talk to me, and try and make me more like the rest; and I should like you so."

"That I will," said Basil, kindly, and taking Alley's arm; "I owe to you my life, to say nothing of the real pleasure it is to me to be a friend to any one. But will you do what I tell you?"

"Yes, that I will, as far as I can: you tell me what to do."

"Very well, then; first give up that bad set in the school whom you are so afraid of."

"Afraid of?" said Alley, starting; "I am afraid of no one."

"Oh, yes, you are," said Basil, smiling; "you are afraid of Dance, and Crawshay, and Stocker."

"No, I'm not; I can't be. I don't know fear; they always said so at home. Old Clifelt said so, since I was a bairn asleep on the net. I wasn't afraid in the storm, or on the sea." And Alley's eyes sparkled, and his whole manner betokened an energy and spirit which even startled and surprised Basil, in spite of all he had seen of Alley.

"You are not afraid of the storm on the sea, but you are of them."

"No, I'm not. Let one of them hurt Fido, and I would show if I was afraid or no." Fido was a dog to which the boys were attached, and which Alley had especially made his friend. "I would fly at them, I could kill them."

Alley's face and figure assumed a commanding and determined appearance.

"Well, well," said Basil, thoughtfully, "we will see. I will tell you one thing to do: mind me, and we will see if you are brave or no. Who took care of you in the storm and the sea?"

Alley looked for a moment earnestly and thoughtfully,

and then said, in a long, low voice, with his eyes fixed on the bright sky above him, "He Whose way is in the sea, and His paths in the great waters."

He spoke it as a verse he had been taught from his infancy, and there was something so striking about the habitual monotone of his voice, which melted Basil almost to tears.

"Alley," said he, "who guided you in that boat?"

"JESUS," said the boy, bowing as he spoke, "Who said to the winds, 'Peace! be still! and there was a great calm.'"

"Why?"

"Because it wasn't Friday, and because I crossed my oars three times over my waist at starting," said Alley.

"Nonsense," said Basil, in a low voice. "Well, if God does this for you, what do you do for Him?"

"A deal," said he.

"What? do you pray to Him?"

"Yes, out here."

"Do you pray morning and evening?"

"No, because Crawshaw and Stocker laugh, and say I'm a fool."

"Very well," said Basil, "mind me; say your prayers to-night, and never miss them. Do not care what they may say; kneel down."

"But—" said Alley.

"Hush!" said his companion quickly, "hush! remember your promise. I will meet you here to-morrow evening, at the same time and place; tell me what you have done; remember your promise."

Alley darted away, and Basil was left alone. "Strange," said Basil to himself, "very strange. What is the boy? What a strange mixture! Is he religious, or not?"

It was night. Basil was sitting with his books and a single candle burning before him; all was still. A cry of terror reached Basil's ear, which rung along the passage, and seemed to come from the room where Alley slept. In a moment Basil guessed the cause, and he started up, and rushing into the passage, was presently at Alley's door; he threw it open, and there, in the centre of the room, stood a group of figures round the be-

wildered boy, whose starting eyes and extreme paleness showed the alarm he was in.

"Swear," said the loud and commanding voice of Crawshay. "Swear, and you shall be let off; but otherwise—"

"I will not, may not, dare not swear," cried the terrified child.

"Promise, then, not to disturb us again with the cant of your prayers."

"I must say them; old Clifelt taught me them, and he told me I must say them. I have been wicked, very wicked, for neglecting them. Oh, don't, don't."

Two of them were standing over him with a quantity of white lead, which they had prepared to thrust down his throat, and the next moment would have done so, had not Basil entered; he caught Crawshay's arm in his hand, and held it so firmly, that the white lead fell to the ground, and the hand of the persecutor was drawn back.

"What new cruelty is this?" said Basil, his voice quivering with emotion. "What, Dance, you here? you, who were at Willie's death-bed! Shame on you all."

This appeal was not in vain. Many of them drew back, ashamed. Crawshay's indignation knew no bounds; his lip was pale with anger and rage.

"And who, may I ask, am I indebted to for these righteous interferences?" said he, turning towards the young champion, around whose arm Alley was now clinging, partly from the sense of dependence, and partly with an apparent determination to fight for his defender.

But Crawshay did not find that he was at all certainly supported: there was a feeling established by Willie's death which had much altered matters there, and to that feeling Basil had successfully appealed; and Crawshay saw in a moment that on this occasion Basil was too strong for him. Basil withdrew in triumph, and Alley followed; the door of his room again closed upon him.

"Well," said Basil, "Alley, you have been able to act."

"Yes, I tried; but I've looked a fool."

"Not so great a one as when you timidly crouched to them, anyhow," said Basil.

"I did my best," said Alley, looking out of the window.

"Well, God will bless that, don't fear."

"I love you," said Alley, "that I do; it was so kind of you to come and stand up for me."

"I did nothing for you compared with what you have done for me," said Basil.

But Basil little knew how deeply a seed was sown in that boy's heart of love and gratitude to him, which soon had an opportunity of proof.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. TURTON.

It was within a week of the examination; all were full of interest and excitement on the subject. Basil was calm; he had worked very hard, for to him the result of the examination was all-important: his future livelihood and position in life made it to him a matter far beyond one of a temporary honour. The scholarship was worth £80 a year for three years. One other boy was a strong and formidable competitor to Basil; his name was Cox, and he competed not only in the scholarship, but the English essay. Basil had tried hard for both; he excelled in English writing, and he had written, in Talbot's estimation,—a good judge,—an excellent essay. It was put carefully away, and a large body of papers full of notes for the examination, were put away also in a drawer, for Basil to refresh his memory with the last thing.

The school was full of expectation; some were eager for Basil, and some for Cox. Both had their party; Cox was very clever, very reserved, kept strangely to himself, had his friends, never would join the *apertoi*: he was rather old to be at school, had been brought up till lately in India, and came to England in order to be educated and go back. He had a hard head, and a clear expansive mind. Still Basil felt he had a chance, and his friends were very ardent in the expectation that he would succeed.

"Turton's arrived," said Talbot, coming into Basil's room in the evening. "I saw him walk up the avenue; but I hardly saw his face. He had a broad hat, and a great coat, though it's warm enough; and he carried his own carpet-bag."

Mr. Turton was the examining master. Basil longed to see him: how much hung on his decision!

Mr. Turton had arrived. He was a fellow of a college at Oxford; young, thin, calm, a small round face, colourless, no whiskers, his hair combed very straight over his forehead; his forehead was low, narrow, with a good brow; his lips thin and compressed. It was thought he never laughed; but he did once, at a story told by the professor of geology, of a supposed interview between Horace and Shelley on Lake Como: and once more he had laughed at the idea of old Melvil, of Wadham, having a mother. He was one who seemed to repose at the end of life, having seen round everything, and come to the end of all knowledge. He said he had learnt to value everybody, and to see the truth of Aristotle's statement, "that many friends are better than a few or one." "As I used to think when I was young," said Mr. Turton, knocking the head off a thistle with a yellow walking-stick.

Mr. Turton was now just twenty-three and a month: he had got everything he had tried for at Oxford. He had floating ideas of marriage in the distance of life, but they were rather classical than romantic,—rather a sculpture than a picture,—a little cold. There was a Miss Mary Mozart, whom he fancied he loved at sixteen; and he had a kind of idea that she was waiting for him somewhere. He had once written an epistle to her in hexameters and pentameters, like Ovid, which he never sent. The writing of the epistle inflamed his love. He had one sister, who always came to commemoration, and for whom he always gave two breakfast parties; with whom he walked to the boat-races in cap and gown; and went to the concert in the theatre under a blazing sun at four in the afternoon. He was never quite sure whether he was pleased or not at hearing his own college men say, as they passed him, "That's Turton's sister." It was nevertheless a certainty.

Anticipating events, he did marry Miss Mozart at forty, when she was thirty-nine, having, as she said always kept herself for Mr. Turton, and he having done the same for her. Some people most maliciously said, she couldn't help herself, and would have had others, but that others never came. Nothing vexed her more than this statement. Report always said that Mr. Turton once seriously thought of marrying the daughter of a Head of a College, who had helped her father edit a great book. Her name was Anna Maria something; but it never came about. They both wore spectacles when they married.

He had a living in Leicestershire, of £800 yearly, a population of 250, one large rich family and two churches to serve. He used to walk with Mrs. Turton every afternoon, was universally respected by the neighbouring clergy, but never edified society in which he always appeared. He never rose to anything else. He was only known twice afterwards to the literary world: once he contributed to an encyclopædia, and once published his visitation sermon in dark blue shining paper. But we anticipate the future. Mr. Turton, the examiner, came: all was excitement. Mr. Turton had Mr. Dobson's best bedroom.

CHAPTER XIX.

REAL TROUBLE.

It was dark on the night before the examination. Basil had gone to bed early, as he was tired and exhausted with work. His books lay about the table, open at the pages at which he had been last studying. His drawers were open, in which lay his papers, arranged for correcting to-morrow, and his Essay which was one of the most essential parts of the examination work. The sheets lay in their order. The last look was to be made to-morrow, and the pages to be numbered. He lay asleep upon his bed, with his jacket and waistcoat off, and his candle burning with a long wick upon the table. He

started, on hearing what he thought the sound of some one in the room ; but turned round and slept again.

He woke early : he had determined to do so (and we can always wake nearly at the time we wish). It was just daylight: the candle on the table burnt in the socket. Basil slowly rose, sleepy and tired and chilly, to go on with his work. The eventful and important day had come, and the few hours of the early morning were needful to look over his work and get ready. He first took up his notes, which he had a long time ago prepared on paper to refresh his memory, but they were all deranged, no paper was in its place, many were slit and torn, and some crossed with ink. He gazed in despair on the heap of ruin. He went to the drawer where he had left his essay and his other papers prepared for prizes ; the same ruin marked everything, all was torn and scattered, no two papers together in their right places ; he had foolishly left the pages to be numbered to the last morning. He seized paper after paper, but all was ruin. Basil stood staring on the dreadful work. His rather inaccurate mind needed the aid of the last looking-over, and he sat down, thrust his hands through his hair, and burst into tears.

It was evident, while he was asleep, some one had come into his room with the malicious and cruel intention of destroying all his hopes. The alarm and consternation he was in for the moment prevented his even beginning to suspect who had done it. How long he sat in this posture, he didn't know, but he was roused at last by the touch of Talbot's hand on his shoulder, and the well-known voice : " Well, old fellow, what's the matter now ? "

Daylight had burst through the yellow blind that covered the window, and the candle had burnt out in its socket. Poor Basil sat there half-stunned and half-asleep, without noticing one or the other. Talbot had promised to get up early to help him to run through his note-books, and had now come in for that purpose.

Basil pointed with his fingers to the heap of ruin on the table and in the drawers, and his eye was fixed on Talbot : without speaking, his countenance told the tale.

"It's Crawshay and those brutes," said he, clenching his fist in indignation; "they've done the work."

There was no time to lose. To try and aid poor Basil on this critical morning was Talbot's aim, but aid was useless, and long before they even could begin to prepare the loss of the notes by running through the passages of the Agamemnon and the other books, the stir below in the schoolroom announced that they were all preparing for work. Bets and wagers ran high amongst the boys on the two candidates: with the party of Talbot and the *αριστοι*, Basil was the favourite; his rival was the favourite with the rest of the school.

At breakfast conversation ran high on the probabilities of success of the one and the other. Cox appeared at breakfast, pale, haggard, and exhausted with hard reading, but in his eye was the confidence of success. He was a youth of considerable powers of the mind, hard intellect, and profligate life and manners. His face was blotted with those red marks, which, starting from the pale complexion, told that already the work of intemperance had begun, young as he was.

"See, the conquering hero comes!" cried Crawshay from the end of the table.

"We are dead sure of the supper-party," cried Dance, "to-morrow night; our horse will be in at the goal; I can tell that by the curl of his lip. Won't you, old fellow?" said he, striking Cox on the shoulder, as he sat down in the centre of the group of his supporters, with a smile on his face, which meant that he felt certain of success; and that while he was very willing to use his friends, he could do perfectly well without them.

But where was Basil? He hadn't appeared, or Talbot either. At length the door opened, and Talbot entered, looking very grave, and sat down without speaking a word.

Sundry winks and smiles at the end of the table told that many eyes were watching the hero of the *αριστοι*.

"Isn't Basil coming to breakfast?" said Crawshay, with an air of indifference, as he sat at the other end of the table.

"No," said Talbot, quietly, "he's busy just now; he won't appear before the examination bell rings."

Several looked at each other, and there was a silence.

CHAPTER XX.

THE EXAMINATION.

At length the bell did ring, and a universal rush was made to the room where the examination was held: a large table in the middle of the room covered with books, two chairs for Mr. Dobson and Mr. Turton, pens, ink, and foolscap on the table, and forms terraced up against the opposite wall, were the chief marks and features at the end of the room. The eventful hour had at last struck from the school clock, the bell had rung the signal for a rush to the room in which had been decided for so many years so many fates and destinies. Mr. Turton had been breakfasting with the doctor, and the curate of the parish had been asked to meet him. The breakfast was the most carefully provided, every thing was neat, clean, and bright; tea, coffee, chocolate, hot sausages, French rolls, marmalade, anchovy paste, pickled salmon, &c.

"I thought I'd give you an Oxford breakfast," said Mr. Dobson, with tears starting to his eyes.

"Excellent," said Mr. Turton; "I quité fancy breakfasting at Baliol; you couldn't have hit it off better."

Mr. Dobson cried with joy; the conversation was dry and desultory, hard to get up. Mr. Turton was brooding over the examination questions.

When the bell rung which announced that all was ready, Mr. Turton had ascertained by sundry questions the whereabouts of the two candidates, and had made sundry marks on a long strip of paper. By this time all the boys were assembled in the room; they sat in tiers, one above another, opposite the awful table. Crawshay sat at the bottom, with his head thrown back between Stocker's knees, with his eyes turned up in Stocker's face like a portrait on the wrong side of a silver spoon. Behind Stocker sat Dance, looking down over Stocker's shoulders into Crawshay's face like the nymphs looking into the

pool after Hylas. On either side were ranged the various parties in the school, each employed according to their separate tastes, some in drawing little strange figures of disproportioned men on well drawn horses, others eating those many things so comprehensively expressed by the word "trick," which always goes at school with its twin-sister "tick," unless the two happen to have been separated by that equally common school hyphen "tip;" some were in full talk on the price of oysters, on the probability of Eclipse beating Andover at the Derby, on the wealth, wickedness, and slang of their respective governors; some were asleep already. The great majority of this mass were in favour of Basil's rival, and heavy bets were made on him. The *apostoi* occupied a corner on seats by themselves, where they sat in solemn dignity.

Trevelyan had an eye-glass screwed up between his eye-brows, looking on the opposite wall, which he had done a hundred times before.

"Basil's sure of it—I think—I haven't the least doubt of it," said he, in a quiet gentlemanly tone meant to be an unfamiliar answer to any one of those many who sat around him. It was clear that neither in boyhood nor manhood Trevelyan would commit himself by want of reserve; he was the essence of a gentleman, who was always trying to express in every thing he said and did, "Keep at arm's length." You can see him lounging down High Street, Oxford, the very essence of fashion, with a riding-whip in his hand, giving a nod to the dearest friend that he had had at school, or to his first-cousin by his mother's side, which would mean, with a hundred other things, "Never shake hands with me." And you can see him, after he had left Oxford, when he was staying with his Aunt Lady Mary Harcourt in Park Lane, riding in Rotten Row, and staring at the dearest college friend he had, in company with whom he had dined the day before, as if he had never seen him in his life. You can see what he would be at sixty, tall, gentlemanly, with a blue coat, grey hair, riding away from his club, looking at you with a melancholy and vacant stare, which means, No one ever has known me,

and no one ever shall, while life lasts. Of course he never married, and left all his money to his grand nephew.

Pulteney was leaning back and smiling classically; he had a volume of Herodotus in his hand and said, "Don't you remember that passage in old Herodotus how the Scythians bought their wives, &c.?" He always had a power of narrating events and customs from "old Herodotus," as if there was a peculiar power, wit, and charm about the Ionian chronicler, which gave you two impressions: first, that you were a great fool that you didn't know them yourself, and that Pulteney was very wise: and secondly, although you thought you knew a dozen stories quite as good out of English writers, and that though you couldn't for the life of you see why they were not much better, yet you were deeply and awfully impressed by the idea of their inferiority; there also appeared a strange amount of *non sequitur* in many of his allusions. All this was singularly the case on the present occasion, when he compared Mr. Turton to one of the Scythian's wives, and the examination to the bartering for them in the market.

Talbot, to whom the remark was addressed, could not see in the least degree the point of it; besides, his eye was fixed with anxiety on the door through which his friend was to enter.

Dobbs sat next Brooke.

"I say, old fellow," said he, "I wonder how that old fellow Turton would look on my father's chestnut blood mare? how I should like to see him upon her; wouldn't she give him a winder? I say, what do you think my father says? he'll send her for me on the day of the holidays for going home."

"I say, I'll tell you what—"

But the long series of "I say" was stopped by the entrance of Mr. Dobson, Mr. Turton, and staff.

And there was Wimpkins, dressed entirely in black, with his hair beautifully arranged, as it always was, leaning his elbow on the back form, and his long legs dangling over the lower one, while his other hand was parting the hair of another boy who sat next him; passing his fingers

through the pomatum forest and saying, "Dear Dibbins, what a nice fellow you are; let us be friends for ever. Do let us come and read 'Byron's Corsair' after this horrid examination, in that dear little wood down in that dell, which you know I've called 'Dibbins' Dell.'"

"Yes," said Dibbins, "do let's."

Dibbins was a very thin, fair boy, with cheeks that went right in on each side of his face like the Bay of Biscay and the Gulf of Lyons on each side of the Pyrenees. In this case the Pyrenees would be his upper lip, and their fir forests would be represented by that growing crop which he had already begun to encourage, though to his great distress, his hair was so fair no one could see them but himself, and that in a glass.

"Dear Dibby," said Wimpkins, as he smoothed down the crop with his white finger, "a little longer than yesterday."

"Do you think so?" said Dibbins with a sigh; "I use macassar to them every night."

"Duckey!" said Wimpkins, with an ecstatic laugh.

Dibbins had a long, thin projecting jaw, a blue eye, very large and melancholy; a quantity of fair hair hung over his jacket collar, falling collars, because Wimpkins couldn't bear stick-ups, and also because it looked like Byron. He was always neatly dressed, excessively stupid, didn't know *dominus*; but then he said he couldn't bear languages, and couldn't imagine why if a boy had a taste for poetry he should do anything but cultivate Byron.

Reader, imagine Dibbins cultivating Byron for six years! what would be the result? It would be like a piece of mignonette drawn up in a hothouse fifteen feet high, thick, sickly, and faint: such was Dibbins, the friend of Wimpkins.

"MY INTENSELY LOVED MOTHER," wrote Wimpkins, — "I have found such a friend! one's ideal, all the panting heart yearns for! I shall bring him home with me next holidays; I'm sure you'll die over him. His name is Dibbins; we've sworn eternal friendship over the altar of Byron. We intend to marry two sisters on the same day,

with no money, for we both agree in hating money. My heart is too full to write more.

"Your own devoted and dutiful

"WILLIAM."

Such was one of the letters Wimpkins wrote to his mother, and which Miss Holmes, his mother's friend, had carefully put away in a drawer, with a view, as she said, of eventually inserting them in his memoir, as an instance of his sweet and sensitive disposition.

Unfortunately Mr. Wimpkins, his father, saw it lying open on the table. "Bless the boy!" said he; "he shall bring none of his eternal friends here. Why last term he was mad in love with a young woman of eight-and-thirty, and now he's going to marry a young sister without any money. My dear, you ruin that boy; you make a perfect fool of him. Mark, this Dibbins shall not come."

But Mrs. Wimpkins had provokingly taken up the pen to answer her son's note, without answering her husband.

"MY LIFE'S DARLING," wrote she,— "Bring him with you—"

"Do you hear me, my dear?" said Mr. Wimpkins.

Mrs. Wimpkins looked sorrowful, but made no answer.

Mr. Wimpkins seized a riding-whip and dashed out of the room.

"Hard-hearted, cruel, unfeeling man," said Miss Holmes, taking up Lalla Rookh.

Mrs. Wimpkins sighed, and went on writing.

Such were some of the boys gathered in the open space of the examination-room, as Basil and his rival entered.

Mr. Turton rose, kept his cap on, and rattled a bone paper-knife between his front teeth; he looked awfully calm, motionless as a summer-sea without a ripple.

The examination began with Cox. Mr. Turton put him on a chapter in Herodotus about the customs of the Egyptians. Cox began in a bold and rapid tone. "O;

de Aiyvntes. But the Egyptians," began Cox, in an easy rapid tone. Mr. Turton demurred. Cox looked up suddenly. Mr. Turton rattled his paper-knife between his teeth and looked full at Cox without any emotion.

"I think not," said Mr. Turton, in a soft sweet voice.

What refinement of scholarship has he got hold of, thought Pulteney, *Aiyvntes* not Egyptians?

"The inhabitants of Egypt," said Cox, with an earnest bolt of his voice. Mr. Turton still stared coldly and quietly; "Well," said he, "I think not quite."

What on earth does the fellow mean? thought Cox, arching his eyebrow as he looked down on the page of his book, half as if he was going to cry and half as if going to burst out laughing. "The inhabitants of Egypt," said Cox.

"Do you think so?" said Mr. Turton, softly, looking calmly at him, and still playing the tune between his teeth. Cox grunted, and looked down on his book rather disgusted. Several heads were now put forward in real earnest to see what Mr. Turton would be at. "Ah, well," said Mr. Turton, "never mind, go on,—thank you."

Poor Cox went on, shrugging his shoulder and looking disconsolate, the steam was taken out of him. No one to this day knows what Mr. Turton could mean; you might as well try to fathom the bottomless lake at Dolgelly, as to find out that. Other matters went on in the same way. But Cox did well; the history was first-rate, and all the boys were interested. Mr. Turton's sickly cheek did once relax into a smile of satisfaction, as he half leant over the table to catch Cox's answers. He demurred to two or three points in history in a way that astonished the community; as for instance, when Cox said Henry VIII. was King of England, and that Marlborough fought the battle of Blenheim, and that Charles I. lost his head, at all these statements of Cox's Mr. Turton hesitated and said, "Not quite," and "go on, thank you."

"I say, old cove," said Crawshay, looking up into Stocker's face, "what was Henry VIII. king of? I thought he was King of England?"

"I suppose you thought wrong then," was the laconic answer.

"What is he at?" said Pulteney to Talbot; "I can't make him out."

"Oh, that the desert were my dwelling-place!" said Dibbins.

"Don't quote so loud," said Wimpkins; "you'll be heard."

"I don't care," said Dibbins, in an enthusiastic voice; "I'm a devotee to Byron."

"Thank you," said Mr. Turton, in a determined firm voice, as he put down the last book on the table; it was the eighty-fifth time he had said it, and he wound up in a decided tone, and Cox's friends augured the best things. The essay was excellent, and so was the Latin writing.

It was poor Basil's turn next. Mr. Turton put him on in a chorus in the Medea; it was one of the very choruses he had meant to have looked over the last thing, but the derangement of his books prevented him. He was floored a good deal, and Talbot trembled, and Pulteney grew restless. Poor Basil was hot and cold alternately, and looked up with an earnest searching gaze into Mr. Turton's face. He did some things admirably, especially his Latin writing. At length came the conclusion. Mr. Turton conferred with Mr. Dobson in a whisper, and finished aloud saying, "The essay will turn the scale,—the essay."

But, poor Basil! there was no essay forthcoming. There was no use in telling his sad tale; his best line was to be silent. There was no essay, no verses, nothing else. Mr. Turton took up the Latin writing again; he re-examined it; the *apostoi* grew more hopeful.

"He'll do, at last!" said Talbot, earnestly bending forward.

The excitement ran high through the school; the examination was over. Cox's friends gathered round him, full of congratulations.

"Well done, old fellow; you've beat him—that's sure!"

Several hands clapped him on his shoulder, and several

eyes were fixed on his face, to catch the look of recognition from one whom they felt sure would be a hero. Cox looked pale, clever, and indifferent: there were several spots on his face which indicated hard living.

"Oh, never mind, old fellows; let's forget all that. Come and let us have our supper at the Crown."

It had long been the custom of the school that the candidates should give a supper-party to their several supporters; so off set the whole of his body to the room, already prepared for the festivity of the evening. Basil, too, had his friends and earnest well-wishers. The *apistoi* were around him.

"I think you are sure of success," said Wimpkins; "you construed that Herodotus so beautifully, and you looked so nice. Where did you get that pin from in your neckcloth, Basil?"

"What a fool the fellow is!" said Brooke, in an undertone; "as if the looks of a fellow would settle an examination."

"I say; isn't that examiner a muff?" said Dobbs; "he's exactly like a groom my father had when he bought Black Sally from S. Alban's, and the groom rode her home."

"He didn't give you a fair examination in that Livy," said Pulteney; "he didn't know it himself."

"Well," said Talbot, drawing Basil aside, "I can't help hoping that all will be right; he took up that Latin a second time: he seemed so pleased with it, reading it to Mr. Dobson. But it's a horrible thing about this trick that was played you; we must have it investigated directly. The essay of course is lost; but if you get the scholarship, it is all that matters. But, come along; the *apistoi* give a supper to-night; and so we must have a talk afterwards about what we are to do."

Basil was silent, evidently anxious, and paid little heed to the remarks made around him. The whole party set off to Talbot's room, where the supper had been prepared.

Basil had done well, very well; and long and anxious was the investigation Mr. Dobson and Mr. Turton made that evening over the various papers and work. His

Latin writing was exceedingly good, and his Greek scholarship very fair, for a boy of his age.

"It's a strange thing," said Mr. Dobson, "this destruction of the poor youth's papers. I fear there's some ill-feeling in the school, of which I, with all my keen knowledge of human nature,—of which I flatter myself I have no small share,—have not been able to discover the cause. Dr. Parr used to tell me, that I had the very eyes of a Cerberus in detecting the motives of boys, sir; and I reckon that no small compliment, sir, from such a man as Dr. Parr. I treasure it among the happy circumstances of my life, that I had the eulogium of that eminent scholar." Here poor Mr. Dobson cried, laughed, wiped his spectacles, shook all over, and finished by steadily gazing at Mr. Turton, and saying, "Eh, sir?"

"Really," said Mr. Turton, drily, as he was thinking over the respective merits of the papers before him; for a scrupulous and conscientious examination, and weighing the claims of either side, were amongst his virtues.

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Dobson; "and I believe fully the remark to be true. The very moment a new boy comes, I form my opinion of his character; and I find it has always been correct. There's Wimpkins, sir; did you notice him? he's the pride and ornament of the school; and the moment I saw him, the moment he came here, I prognosticated his brilliant and refined future through the paths of university success, and the honours of a parliamentary career; and, sir, he is—he is all I expected; almost, sir, without a fault. The day will come when it will be said, that it is an honour to the man that brought up Wimpkins." And poor Mr. Dobson wept again.

Mr. Turton still maintained his stonelike silence. "Admirably turned," said he to himself, looking over a passage in Basil's Latin. "Pray, sir, does this youth owe his excellent Latinity to his instruction received here?"

"Here is a case in point," said Mr. Dobson, starting forward eagerly. "The first moment I saw him cross the threshold of my study, I said,—but not loud enough for him to hear,—'here's a walking Facciolati, an embryo Facciolati.' I knew it, sir, in an instant. Dr. Parr's

predictions have been most happily verified; I have a knowledge of character.—Latin, sir? the first piece the boy Cox showed me—”

“I wasn’t speaking of Cox,” said Mr. Turton; “I mean the other boy,—Basil.”

“Oh, ah!” said Mr. Dobson, “well—yes—” but the good old gentleman was rather in a difficulty, whether or not by the intention of Mr. Turton did not appear.

At this moment the footman brought in some port wine and biscuits, which for a moment aided the discomfited philosopher; but he quickly turned to the charge.

“There’s the boy Crawshay; did you notice him? he’s the last arrival. He’s the sweetest-tempered, most gentle, and courteous, and well-principled youth in my establishment. I said he was an ornament—an ornament, sir; and so he’s proved.”

“A precious ornament,” thought the footman, who was leaving the room, having just before seen Crawshay put to bed roaring drunk by four boys, and shouting at the top of his voice, “The three jolly postboys!” But, of course, footmen are more likely to be mistaken in knowledge of human nature than schoolmasters.

“What’s that noise, William?” said Mr. Dobson to the footman, “there’s some one calling out.”

“It’s Mr. Crawshay, sir,” said the footman, struggling to maintain his calmness and gravity; “he’s not well; he’s got a pain, sir.”

“Bless me!” said Mr. Dobson, starting up, “he’s the model and type of my establishment. Let me see, William; I think his room is the—”

“Please, sir, you mustn’t go up stairs; the housekeeper says he must be kept quite quiet,” said the footman, getting frightened; “there’s a sign of fever.”

“Fever!” said Mr. Dobson, in horror and alarm, “what will his mother say? Has the housekeeper sent for the doctor, William?”

All this time the discomfited footman was struggling in vain to get the door shut, when at this moment the voice of Crawshay was heard roaring out the last line of the first stanza of the “three jolly postboys,” followed by

an earnest exhortation to the four boys who were trying to keep him down to join in the chorus, which they, being somewhat excited, immediately did. The noise was now stupendous.

"Bless me!" said Mr. Dobson, "the fever must be very high. William, you must, I assure you—"

"Immediately," said William, shutting the door, at all risks, in his master's face, and darting off to allay the tumult.

Mr. Dobson's fears were soon allayed, and he returned to his chair, pouring out a glass of port wine, which he gave to Mr. Turton, and he took another himself. Mr. Turton pushed aside the papers, crossed his legs, and took the wine; and fixed his cold and stony gaze on Mr. Dobson, as if face, eyes, and all had been chiselled out of different coloured marble.

"Yes, sir, I was saying," said the schoolmaster, "that the excellent Dr. Parr—oh, no, it was about Crawshay I was speaking. I knew him in a moment, sir; the most quiet, docile, gentlemanly, and religious youth that ever entered my establishment; and I've been correct up to this present hour."

"Very fortunate," said Mr. Turton, quietly.

After a few more similar remarks and equally striking truths, night sank on the slumbers of Mr. Dobson and Mr. Turton. Both slept secure in conscious pre-eminence in their respective lines: the first, in his accurate knowledge of character; the second, in having decided, beyond a doubt, which was the most deserving candidate. How far either were right, reader, time must show.

CHAPTER XXI.

ENGLISH ESSAYS.

NEXT morning, the whole school were assembled with intense anxiety, to hear the result of the examination for the scholarship and the prizes. There were several papers

sent in for competition for the English Verse and English Essay: the subject for the English Essay was "the Pyramids." Wimpkins of course tried for this, as for everything else. The reader would like perhaps to judge for himself, by standing in Mr. Turton's shoes, as to the merits of the various compositions.

The following was the opening of Wimpkins's essay:—
"Frowning in the morning and smiling in the evening of the cloudless heat of the distant East, offspring of the desert of sand and the wilderness of dust, protectors of the mighty streams of the seven mouths and guardians of the sacred Nile, sepulchres of Egypt's almost forgotten kings, tombs of the mummies and objects of Belzoni's research, emulating Athos in the West, Caucasus in the East;—"

"When is this sentence coming to an end?" thought Mr. Turton, as he laid the paper down, having decided, (as no doubt the gentle reader also has,) that Wimpkins can't get the prize. "What do all these sentences refer to?"—"Oh, it's the Pyramids; that comes ten lines lower down," Wimpkins would have said, if he had been at his elbow.—"What, ten lines more without a semi-colon?" said Mr. Turton.

Here is Brooke's Essay on the same subject:—"The Pyramids are great triangular things, each side the Nile. Some think they were built by the kings of Egypt; some don't. I believe, somebody thinks the people of Israel built them: I don't. They contain a great quantity of mummies, and the walls are painted with hieroglyphics. Napoleon Buonaparte fought a great battle under them, called the Battle of the Pyramids. I don't know what use they are to mankind; but—"

Here came the end of Brooke's first page, and Mr. Turton thought this gentleman had exhausted all his subject already, and saying "I don't see quite how he is going on," he laid the essay down as unsuccessful, (in which judgment, I dare say, reader, you will coincide).

Dobbs also tried ; but the poor boy made rather a mistake in his subject :—"Pyramid was bred betwixt the Eclipse and Amphion, that won the Derby last year, thirteen hands high and a half, slightly chesnut, and white about the fetlocks, thick flanks, and Arab-looking neck ; she came in two hands and a half before Tantalus, as pretty a sight as you ever saw."

"This gentleman seems to have misunderstood the subject," said Mr. Turton ; "I should have thought he was writing about a horse. Some people say, if you understand your subject, it is half the battle : it appears so in this case."

Wimpekin's Byronic friend Dibbins wrote also :—"Sweet memorials of the forgotten past ! I love you. It was under your age-worn walls, Childe Harold sat and wept. My soul yearns for a place, solitary and sad, among your countless mummies, where I forgotten and alone may forget alike the world and man."

"This gentleman seems to have mistaken poetry for prose," said Mr. Turton, laying the paper down.—"I hate prose," Dibbins would have said, if he had been there.—"Then, don't write essays," Mr. Turton would have said in answer.

Talbot also wrote. Here is Talbot's :—"The traveller through Egypt seeing those great monuments of antiquity is induced to ask their origin, their date, their use, and their formation. Our subject consequently divides itself into four parts ; each of which we will consider, but before doing which we must ascertain the exact meaning of the terms of our thesis. The term 'Pyramids' expresses those vast triangular and conical masses, sometimes quadrilateral, which rise on either side the Nile, and are peculiar to the ancient country of Egypt. Having thus explained the terms of the thesis, we proceed to examine more closely the various branches of our subject. First, with regard to the origin of these structures. They are supposed to have been the works of the Children of Israel, when employed in brick-making by Pharaoh. The basis for this hypothesis is as follows :—"

"A little stiffish," said Mr. Turton, laying it down. "The plan of his treatment of his subject, a little too transparent. We don't want to see marks of the scaffold after the house is built up."

Here is Pulteney's essay :—"Pyramids are mentioned by Herodotus, Book II., chap. vii. He gives an account of their structure and their history."—(Here follows a long catalogue of Herodotus's description, a little more than a series of translations of the old Ionian chronicler.) "Dionysius Halicarnassens makes the following. I compare these ancient testimonies with the modern traveller, Geisbach from Germany, who verifies more especially the account given by Dionysius. Sir George Collins, an English traveller in 1837, bears out the account of Dionysius in the following passages."

"A little too bookish," said Mr. Turton, throwing down the paper. "The boy is well read, and he shows it too much. We want a little free thought in an essay."

"Every country in the world has its peculiar characteristic, which separates it from all other countries and gives it its own feature and character. Sometimes this characteristic is natural and sometimes artificial. What the Parthenon is to Greece and the Seven Hills to Rome and the Alps to Switzerland, to a great degree the Pyramids are to Egypt: they give it its peculiar distinctiveness amongst the nations of the earth. It is generally the case that these distinctive features of the country embody the leading characteristics of the people, or some of the more prominent features of their past history; so that when we look at these, we are looking at the expression of the idea of the country itself. Colossal, gigantic, imperishable, ancient, and mysterious, the Pyramids at once reflect the characteristics of Egypt, the most ancient and the most durable of the nations of the earth. We will examine their history."

This essay got it: it was Cox's.

"Good!" said Mr. Turton: "there's a width of thought about this. He goes down to secondary thoughts, not content with superficial ones on the sub-

ject. He takes a wide and bold grasp. There's no pedantry or excess of language: good, simple, and masculine English. I like it much."

So Cox got the English Essay, and Cox's party cheered. And now came the critical moment. Who had got the Scholarship? All was breathless expectation. Basil was as pale as death, and his hands were cold and clammy: that Scholarship was everything to him; without it he could not go to Oxford; he had worked hard for it. He had unbuttoned his top waistcoat-button six times during the last minute, and buttoned it again: he thought if he unbuttoned and buttoned it once more, the seventh time, he should get the scholarship; and so he did. He had passed his fingers through his hair five times in the last twenty seconds: he thought if he did it the sixth time, he should get it; so he did.

Cox was perfectly indifferent, leaning back between Crawshaw's knees, talking about the supper they should have to-night, tossing his cap up and down, and catching it with his front teeth.

Mr. Turton made a short laconic speech, hummed and hawed a little, spoke of the respective merits of each of the examinations, and declared that Cox had got it.

Poor Basil!

A burst of loud cheers rose from Cox's side of the room. They all rushed round their hero, and bore him in triumph to the inn where they were to dine.

The *apistoi* remained behind, sad and discomfited, and every heart was simply concerned on how to help poor Basil, whose hopes in life had been so blighted.

"Not My will, but Thine be done!" whispered Talbot in Basil's ear.

Basil smiled in Talbot's face, and pressed in his own clammy hand the hand of friendship so frankly offered him.

The two friends retired to Talbot's room, where they had learnt one of their first lessons in the meaning of that verse which says, "Out of much tribulation we enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE INVESTIGATION.

THE general feeling amongst all the best of the school was one of indignation at the perpetrator of the deed. Who was he? and what had been his motive? This feeling was strongest of course on the part of Talbot and the *απιστοι*; but all pretended to have no participation in it, and the general indignation went up to Mr. Dobson, and even affected galvanically Mr. Turton, on the morning of his departure.

"You have no idea, I suppose, yet; have you?" said Crawshay, leaning over the dinner-table to Talbot, "who has done this rascally thing? It ought to be shown up; it's disgusting."

His manner was so free and open and gentlemanly, that Talbot was for the moment quite thrown off his guard, and really thought Crawshay was as innocent as a new-born babe.

"No," said Talbot, "I wish I did; I would take care the school should not be much longer cumbered with him."

"Ah, just so; quite right. What, you think you have influence enough with the old gentleman to get the guilty party expelled; eh?"

"Well, I should hope without that there could be no doubt of it," said Talbot, "my wish as captain was asked by the whole school."

"Oh, yes, that, of course, it would be. Disgusting! very ungentlemanly! We must track it out."

A servant entered, to ask Talbot to repair immediately to Mr. Dobson.

The good gentleman was seated in his study, and was in the act of clearing his throat and wiping his spectacles as Talbot entered.

"Well, Talbot," said he, "this is a very bad matter—a very nasty trick indeed, and we must investigate it—

investigate—eh, sir,—investigate the matter.” For Mr. Dobson had thoroughly ascertained that the whole spirit and goodwill of the school was with him, and consequently he could afford to act boldly. Every boy respected, if they did not love, Basil.

“How do you propose conducting the investigation, sir?” said Talbot, quietly.

“Why, well, there’s the point; I do feel a little—a very leetle delicate, and, to say the truth, anxious on that head. You see, sir, conviction—conviction is so important, and a false accusation on us, might, if it fell on certain quarters,—hem, ah,—Talbot, do the school up,—do it up, sir,” said the schoolmaster, musing suddenly in great agitation at the picture he had conjured up before his mind. “If I only heard of a suspicion—a suspicion, you see, which might fall on some head where ‘connection’ would not be impaired, then, why, then, we might follow it up with boldness, you know.”

“Yes, sir,” said Talbot, looking out of the window and frowning.

“Imagine, for instance,” continued the schoolmaster, scared by his own imagination; “imagine, suspicion falling on such a youth as Crawshay, or Stocker, or Trevelyan, or yourself.”

“I hope not, sir,” said Talbot, starting, scared with the very idea of such a suspicion.

“Oh, no,” said Mr. Dobson, “that I am quite sure of; but still you see how very difficult it is. You have then no suspicion?”

“No, sir,” said Talbot.

“I wonder if Crawshay has: he seems a leading and important youth in the school,” said Mr. Dobson, laying his hand on the bell.

“Have you done with me, sir?” said Talbot.

“Oh, no, pray, stop; conference, sir, consultation may be useful.”

The footman and Crawshay returned.

“About this matter, Crawshay: we were saying, if there was any suspicion or clue, we might, before investigation,—eh, can you suggest? have you any suspicion?”

“Well, sir,” said Crawshay, “it is a most painful oc-

currence, but it is very painful to breathe suspicion. I could not rightly say I had none."

"Ah, oh!" said Mr. Dobson, "who?"

"Well," said Crawshay, "we are among friends who will not take an undue advantage: but the boy Alley—"

Oh, the weight at once relieved from Mr. Dobson's mind!

"The boy Alley? ah, I thought so! I thought as much! I *knew* it! I was positive of it! The little ruffian! No friends, no influence; he must suffer, sir; he must suffer, he shall suffer, gentlemen; suffer severely, I will promise you: I will assure you the school shall be relieved of this stain before the world is a day older;" and the indignant schoolmaster laid violent hold of the bell.

"Stop, sir, one moment," said Talbot, "if I might speak: Alley has not yet been convicted."

"No; why, no, that's true, that's right; but still, it is all the same; that is, there can be no doubt. No, well, we will at once send for him."

"I think, sir," said Talbot, "that he's not in the way: he has been missing ever since the examination, and indeed before that."

"Guilty, guilty, ay, guilty! I see it all plainly and painfully enough: very painful indeed! The ungrateful fellow! when I took him in as such a favour and so against my will. Oh, the ingratitude! He shall suffer for it; he shall suffer for it."

"Yes, it seems, indeed, too true," said Crawshay, with a smile, which indicated his intense desire to see the right done, and the true offender punished.

"Well, he must be found; he must be found. I suppose the young gentleman can't have gone far. I must fix a day and hour for the investigation. Meantime, Mr. Crawshay, may I beg you will do your best and get the evidence ready?"

"Yes, sir," said Crawshay, with a bow, and left the room.

"Excellent young man, that," said Mr. Dobson to Talbot, when Crawshay was gone out; "a star and ornament to the school."

Talbot was musing by himself, and looked anxious.

Where could Alley be? He was quite convinced of his innocence. The boy was strange, very; that was true; but still he did not believe for one moment he was guilty of this: besides, he had been really attached to Basil of late, and this would be wholly at variance with his conduct.

As soon as he left Mr. Dobson, he went in search of Basil. Basil was alone in his room, waiting for Talbot.

"Basil, have you any idea where Alley is?"

"No, none. I am certain the report in the school is false; he had nothing to do with the plot."

"I wish," said Talbot, "I knew where he was: it goes so against him being away just now, and that fellow Crawshay is sure to do his utmost against him."

Hour after hour passed, and still he did not come, and the messengers had been sent in every direction, but no track or trace of him could be discovered. The hour was fixed next day for the investigation, and the evidence which, before noon that day, Crawshay announced to Mr. Dobson that he would be able to get, and by it would entirely crush and condemn Alley. The excitement in the school was high. Most of them felt heartily for Alley, and many and many a dark suspicion was whispered as to the real perpetrators of the deed. But Crawshay's party held firmly together, and seemed confident of convicting Alley easily.

"If the young ruffian is not found," said Mr. Dobson, "I shall pass sentence of expulsion on him, and ban and bar him from entering the house again."

Mr. Dobson entered the school with considerable dignity. It was just the case for him, as the victim was an easy one: he had no great connexions, and his loss would rather be a gain to Mr. Dobson than a loss. He had originally taken him in, partly to please an old friend.

"We have met here," said Mr. Dobson, "on a very painful occasion. One of your schoolfellows has sadly disgraced himself and disgraced the school. I regret it, but how can I help it? I can but wipe out the stain by

removing the obnoxious member, and that I shall do immediately, whatever may be the serious loss to myself. It is a positive duty. Mr. Crawshay, have you got any evidence against the boy Alley? The fact can hardly need evidence, for he has given evidence enough against himself, by absconding. He is guilty, and he feels he had better anticipate his impending fate."

"Sir," said Crawshay, moving round, "it is a painful duty which I have to perform; but I hope it will be fully believed that, in my desire to do good to the school and the common cause of truth, I shall be exculpated from the charge of telling tales against my companions." Crawshay looked round; murmurs of assent and applause broke from the opposition benches. The *apιστοί* were silent and Talbot looked disquieted. "I have my evidence, sir," said Crawshay: "shall I bring it?"

"Oh, yes, pray, be quick."

The door opened, and a servant entered hurriedly, saying that a person wanted to speak to Mr. Talbot: he placed a note in his hand.

Talbot read it, and started up: he went out, after a whisper to Basil.

Crawshay and Stocker looked anxious, and kept their eyes fixed on Talbot's retiring figure.

"Here's my first evidence, sir," said Crawshay, producing a knife with Alley's name scratched on the silver plate on the side. "This, sir," said he, "was found in the room on the morning of the destruction of Basil's papers, and in the drawer: it lay among many of the pieces of cut paper."

"That seems conclusive," said Mr. Dobson, examining the knife: "conclusive."

At this moment, Talbot dashed into the room again, and came almost breathless up to Mr. Dobson's chair. "Pray, sir, forgive me; but let me beg you to stop this investigation one half-hour: I cannot say why; only half an hour, and I will engage to bring evidence, sir; but I cannot say more."

A scene of confusion was rising. Crawshay looked anxious, and then turned deadly pale.

"No, sir, it is impossible—impossible, Talbot; it is un-

fair—grossly unfair.” His hurry and impetuosity were such that he stopped suddenly short.

Talbot calmly gazed on him with astonishment, which was not feigned but real. “Why object?” said he, with a voice which silenced and astonished everybody. “Do you not wish that Alley should be innocent?”

The appeal was irresistible, and even Crawshay staggered. His excitement had betrayed a wish that Alley should fail.

“Well, well,” said Mr. Dobson; “I do not know what to say. Half-an-hour: I see no objection,” keeping his eyes on Crawshay, to see if he could yield the point safely.

“We had better, at least, lose no time,” said Crawshay; “and while Talbot is gone, we can be examining the remaining evidence.”

Talbot’s lip implied hesitation as to whether he should yield to this view. “Well, then,” said Talbot, “I only ask the half-hour, and then, if I am not back, it must go on as you decide.” He disappeared.

Basil and Pulteney and others of their body were sitting near each other on their forms, evidently discussing Talbot’s departure.

“Here’s my next evidence,” said Crawshay, bringing in the footboy, who approached Mr. Dobson with that strange expression of face which betokened great hesitation as to whether he was going to speak the truth.

“Speak!” said Crawshay.

“Please, sir,” said the boy, “I was up that night in the passage, and I saw Master Alley steal into Master Basil’s room, and I watched till he came out, and I saw him steal out to his own room. I looked round, and shut the door.”

“Conclusive,” said Mr. Dobson, “quite conclusive.”

“But,” said Basil, starting up, “how came Richard in the passage that night? I don’t believe it.”

“I know he might,” said Crawshay: “we had a supper party that night, and he was waiting.”

“Supper party!” said Mr. Dobson, with a voice of thunder; “what, what?”

"If you please, sir, it was a breach of discipline, but I hope you will pass it over: it has been mentioned in the evidence."

"Well, well," said Mr. Dobson, sitting down, "I grant this is not the moment."

"And here, thirdly," said Crawshay, "is another evidence: the strongest of all." Crawshay produced a paper. "This, sir, is Alley's own handwriting."

It was a note, written in what certainly seemed Alley's strange scrawl, addressed to some one unknown, describing his act in destroying Basil's papers.

Mr. Dobson examined the paper. "It is his hand, there is no doubt."

It went round from Crawshay to Basil, who looked at it. It looked like Alley's handwriting, and he could not deny it. Things went against him.

"Well," said Mr. Dobson, "anything more?"

The evidence seemed conclusive, and there now seemed scarcely any hope of saving poor Alley.

"Strange, extraordinary boy!" said Basil to himself; "what can it mean? Why should he wish to have injured me?"

A smile of malicious triumph lit up Crawshay's face, and evidently was shared in by the long line of his supporters on either side.

"Immediate expulsion," said Mr. Dobson, "must be the consequence. I never willingly received the boy. He is a friendless orphan; and I always dread friendless orphans. Good Dr. Parr, in his School Institutes, and Advice to Schoolmasters, says specially, 'Beware always, as of a quicksand, of that false and unnatural philanthropy which would take in friendless orphans!' He shall go—the young reprobate shall go: I will have nothing to do with him. Boy," said he, addressing the footboy, "give orders that Master Alley's things be got ready: he must return to his friends in London who sent him to me; they must be responsible."

"Shall we go, sir?" said Crawshay; "I think the boys want to be at their work for the next school, and we are not likely to do any more in this matter."

"Yes," said Mr. Dobson: "it's very proper in you,

Crawshay, to be anxious about the discipline of the school and its regularity. Dr. Parr says—

"Sir," said Basil, starting up, "sir, you promised Talbot you would wait the full half-hour: it is only twenty minutes yet."

"I see no use in waiting," cried Crawshay: "the fellows are anxious to be gone."

"Sir," said Basil, paying no heed to Crawshay, "I entreat that the time may be given."

"Very well, very well," said Mr. Dobson, "my word must be my bond."

The minutes passed by anxiously enough for both parties. Every ear was listening for the return of Talbot's footsteps in the yard below, and many an anxious eye watched the broad gilded hand of the great school clock through the window as it neared its silent strides towards the appointed half-hour: it wanted but a minute to it, when a distant sound was heard like the tread of steps.

"It's Talbot," said Basil, in a loud, audible whisper, heaving his bosom as he spoke. "Talbot!" was whispered round from mouth to mouth. "And two others with him," cried Basil aloud; "Alley's come!"

A burst of pleasure broke from the large body of the school, and a vexed and angry cloud passed over Crawshay's face. There was but another minute, and Talbot burst into the room; behind him was the tall figure and stern countenance of Mr. Granville, and behind him Alley.

All sounds were now hushed, to hear what was now about to transpire. Mr. Granville's figure and manner were well known in the school and the neighbourhood, though he was but seldom seen; still there was that about him which, once seen, was not soon forgotten. Stern, forbidding, and serene, he created alarm in the ignorant and dislike in the educated. A mystery hung round his fame. Some said he had committed a murder in his youth; some said he had been connected with smugglers; no one knew the truth about him, but all were sure there was something. He was a person of high rank, and, as report said, considerable wealth.

"Oh, my lord, this is a—this is a great and unexpected

honour," said Mr. Dobson, starting up, alarmed at the great man's presence. Be he murderer or smuggler, Mr. Dobson cared little; he was an aristocrat—that was enough.

Mr. Granville coldly bowed. "There is no need to thank me, sir," said he, turning to Mr. Dobson, "none; I simply have come to speak for the injured and the oppressed."

"Injured and oppressed!" said Mr. Dobson, starting; "I trust, Mr. Granville, I trust that my academy does not—"

"Pray, sir, be composed; I regret to say your academy does hold at least one liar and scoundrel."

All eyes were turned on the result of this extraordinary statement.

"Really, my lord—oh, ah! I see—ah, well, I did regret it, ever since I did it; but I saw he was friendless and an orphan, and I felt I should not do wrong, to be kind to him; but I see my error, I see my error; it shall never be again, never: it never does to espouse the cause of orphans."

"You altogether mistake me," said Mr. Granville; "I was speaking of no orphan, and no friendless person; I was speaking of one whose high connections and living parents ought to have prevented him, if no higher motive would, from acting a base and dishonourable part. I speak of one Reginald Crawshay, if he be here; and I beg, sir, he may be pointed out, that I may tell him what I think of him, and purpose doing."

A sensation passed round the room.

"My name is Reginald Crawshay," said Crawshay, coming forward with bold effrontery, and facing Mr. Granville.

"Is it?" said he; "then you, sir, are a liar and a scoundrel; and if Mr. Dobson does not act as school-master, I shall as magistrate."

The attention was breathless. Crawshay, even with all his brazen effrontery, was for the moment abashed.

"I don't know, sir," said he, "how you have a right to insult me, by applying to me terms like these. My father—"

"Silence, sir!" said Mr. Granville; "I can bear out

every word I have said, and will do so before Mr. Dobson and this school; and then see if your insolent effrontery can bear you out in your defiance of every principle of truth and honour."

All noticed how deadly pale Crawshay looked, and how he quailed at last before the words of his accuser.

Mr. Granville then turned to Mr. Dobson, and stated that, on the day before, in the morning, Alley had been brought to his house in custody, as being the resident magistrate of the district; that he was brought on a charge of having robbed Crawshay of money from his desk, and that Crawshay, with two others, named Stocker and Jackson, had appeared to lay and substantiate the charge, but they failed: for reasons I will presently show, I kept Alley with me."

The effect of Mr. Granville's statement was electrical through the school. Crawshay's supporters were discomfited, and only waited to see if their leader had anything to say. The *apistoi*, with their adherents, looked on the battle as gained, and all but a murmur of triumph broke from their lips.

Alley stood in front of Mr. Dobson, with that air of indifference and dulness that baffled the keenest observer; Mr. Granville was perfectly cool and collected; and as Crawshay lifted up his head, which he had hitherto hung down abashed, and seemed to be on the point of defending himself, Mr. Granville stopped him with the words, "Defence, sir, is needless; the evidence I have is unanswerable." So saying, Mr. Granville unfolded a paper, which he proceeded to place before Mr. Dobson.

"This letter," said he, "was, I suppose, accidentally sent in one addressed to myself, bearing the accusation against Alley; it will abundantly, I think, satisfy all present that I have not used towards this young gentleman terms I cannot substantiate."

So saying, he proceeded to read aloud a letter which Crawshay had written to a friend at his old school, giving a full account of the plot against Basil, of the plan of casting the imputed blame on Alley, through the means of apparently circumstantial evidence, and of Alley being

got out of the way, by means of a false accusation laid before the magistrate, which the boy had been entirely innocent of, and which his peculiar disposition of mind would make him entirely unable to disprove. This letter Crawshay had inserted in the envelope he sent to Mr. Granville by mistake.

"Is this your signature?" said he, after having read the letter and placed it before Crawshay.

Crawshay for a moment seemed as if he were about to deny the identity of the handwriting; but finding it impossible to do so, as a murmur of indignation had arisen in every corner of the room, he owned to the circumstance being as Mr. Granville had conjectured, and thoroughly brow-beaten, was about to leave the room.

"Stop!" said Mr. Granville in a voice that made every one start; "stop, sir! whatever Mr. Dobson, as master of this school, may see fit to do in a case like this, I, as the magistrate of this part of the county, will not permit you to leave this room before you have owned, before the whole of this school, the villainy of your own conduct, and have amply apologised to those you have so grossly injured; and if Mr. Dobson does not then proceed to expel you publicly from this school, I, as magistrate, will at once institute a charge against you in court, for false statements made to the hindrance of justice, and to serve your own ends."

There was a pause. What would Mr. Dobson do, poor man? The Mammoth and Behemoth forms of good connection, friends in the country, everything, rose before his eyes; having to expel a youth who paid so handsomely, and owned such high connections as Crawshay. In spite, however, of these awful visions of his prospects, he summoned courage to address Crawshay in terms not lacking dignity; and passing a strong censure on his conduct, proceeded to expel him publicly from the school.

Crawshay tried to laugh it off, but it was vain; it was clear that the wound had been made deeply. He burst out laughing, and turned round to see if any eye met his in sympathy, and any laugh joined with his; but he found none. Universal disgust pervaded all; and Crawshay, crest-fallen, pale, and awkward, left the room.

As soon as he was gone, Mr. Granville turned to Mr. Dobson, and thanked him.

Talbot's face betokened the most entire satisfaction and delight; his eye met Basil's.

"Sir," said he, turning to Mr. Dobson, "before we all leave this room, surely you will vindicate the position of Basil, and let it be thoroughly felt that it is your impression, that, had it not been for this villainous and dishonourable act, he might have succeeded in the examination."

Mr. Dobson, now finding that Basil's was the popular side, both in and without the school, made, in the handsomest and most complete way possible, the redress Talbot called for, and praised the intrinsic merit shown in Basil's papers at the examination.

"And now, my lord," said he, "I have to thank you for the interest you have taken in the affairs of my academy."

Mr. Granville bowed: it was clear that he was one who cared for neither praise nor blame annexed to any act of his own. He had done his work, and retired.

Poor Mr. Dobson had gone through a trying day, and had been compelled to conclude it by an act of stern self-sacrifice for him; but the deed was done, and come what will, he had been compelled to set connection and public opinion aside, for the sake of asserting a case of abstract truth and justice.

Basil never stood higher in the school than he did at that moment. Many was the hand that was stretched out to him that never before had grasped that of one of the *αριστοι*; and the patience and high principle with which he had borne his disappointment, had won for him the admiration and respect of all.

CHAPTER XXIII.

EDITH.

IN a quiet and lovely lane, sheltered all along by hedges, there stood, rather back from the road, in a garden whose green lawn was interspersed with flower beds, a cottage with a thatched roof; a low verandah ran down its front and two sides, and three windows above the verandah looked out from the grey wall, like quiet eyes gazing on the old Church towers that rose about half a mile away, among clusters of trees three fields off. Underneath the verandah there was a pavement made of woodwork, and small wooden baskets, full of flowers; high elm trees, fir trees, and limes rose to a considerable height behind the cottage, on a gently rising hill, sheltering and darkening its back-ground, and skirting either side of the little garden. At the end of the lane was a small common, around which stood two or three poor cottages, and on whose undulating ground, in the summer's evening, geese sauntered pointlessly, and sheep browsed drowsily in the heather and the grass, as the mid-day sun blazed upon their wool; while two or three cows slumbrously chewed the cud, casting their long shadows on the yellow furze.

It was a brilliant April morning, shining with all its cloudless lustre on the verandah and the cottage windows; breakfast lay on the table for two in the little sunny drawing-room; an urn on the table sent up its little cloud of steam towards the ceiling; China, of the plainest white, was set out on the clean white cloth; a sunbeam which had found its way under the verandah, shone with its full heat on the middle of the table, and a large bee, which had sailed in upon the beam, was humming round the room, striking a hundred summer notes in its mazy wanderings; a green basket stood in the window full of moss, out of which grew violets, primroses, and daffodils, the first offerings of spring; a tea-

caddy, with a bunch of keys in it, standing by the table, and a Bible and Prayer-Book lying in the sunbeam, indicating family prayers, completed the picture.

The door opened, and a lady entered; her years approached old age. Two long bands of grey hair, which were drawn down on either side of her forehead, and then were turned within a cap which bore a near approach to that of a widow, lay above the calm, quiet, grey eyes of one whose every line of countenance betokened great early beauty, and a life of keen discipline. Her dress bore as near an approach to that of the mourner as the cap; but though the first impression that you received on seeing her enter might have been sadness, a second look at her sweet and cheerful smile, or a single tone of her kind and gentle voice, would have dispelled the cloud in a moment.

Mrs. Talbot having walked quietly to her seat, made the tea, looked through the open window on to the sunny lawn, looked round the room, and sighed slightly as her eye rested on a portrait on the opposite wall; she then looked at the directions of three letters that lay on the table, leant back in her arm-chair, drew her three rings quietly up her finger, and replaced them as her eye rested on the window. The balmy morning air blew backwards and forwards the large, thin, white muslin curtain, lined with pale blue, and wafted in delicious odours from a pot of mignonette, which had been that morning brought by the gardener from the green-house, where it had been forced; the gentle air deranged one single silver hair from the grey tresses which the lady had drawn up beneath her widow's cap; she quietly replaced the errant straggler as Edith entered the room.

With an eye of the palest blue, and a long black eyelash, and with hair whose luxuriant richness in colour had evidently been borrowed from her mother; with a figure above the ordinary height, more remarkable for the perfect elegance and gracefulness of her quiet movements, than for any peculiar beauty of feature; dressed in a white muslin dress, indicating the joy with which youth always greets the first burst of spring; with a bracelet

fastened on her wrist, which had twice become undone on the staircase, Edith entered the breakfast-room.

"Dear mamma, I'm so sorry I'm late; but I could not make my hair do what I wanted it this morning: it is so provoking to keep you!"

"Never mind, my dear," said Mrs. Talbot; "I have been thoroughly enjoying this delicious morning."

"Oh, mamma, isn't it beautiful?" said Edith, going to the window, as a brilliant colour flushed over her face of something of unearthly loveliness.

Mrs. Talbot looked anxious as she said, "Edith, my dear, has your cough worried you this morning?"

"No, dear mamma, very little. Oh, what a lovely, glorious morning! there is not a cloud in the sky. Mamma, do look at these beautiful hyacinths under the verandah; I never saw them look so radiant with colour before. Oh, mamma, what's that bell going for?" For just then the deep sweet tones of the village church chimed clearly through the morning air.

"It's for little Eva Wilmot; the gardener just told me she had died this morning."

"Oh, mamma! is Eva Wilmot dead? I knew she was very ill; I had no idea she was near death," and as Edith spoke, the brilliant and lovely colour quitted her cheek, and left an ashy paleness behind.

"Yes, my child," said Mrs. Talbot, "dear Eva has gone to her eternal rest; and indeed we can say of her, 'we sorrow not as those without hope.'"

"Yes, that we can, dear mamma," said Edith, coming up to her mother, and kneeling on a little stool by her side; and she reclined her face upon her hand, with her arm resting on the table.

Edith looked at her mother with the fulness of that large blue eye, which seemed to open a passage to her very inmost soul. A tear now filled both of them, which quivered there ready to drop. There was a smile, so sweet and quiet, which played round her lip, that it seemed as if the tear was a mockery. She laid her hand upon her mother's.

"Dear little Eva," said she; "she was only ten years old: so young to die, mamma, isn't it?"

A silence for a few seconds fell on the room, during which the Church bell continued to send its wailing echoes through the open window. Edith's hand was so cold and clammy, that even her mother started. "So young to die, mamma!"—those words were so spoken, that Mrs. Talbot could not avoid reading their too plain interpretation.

"The less of this cold world, the more of heaven, my Edith; the briefer life, the longer immortality," said Mrs. Talbot, as with her finger she parted the hair from Edith's brow, which had escaped from its velvet tire.

"Yes, dear mamma, I know that," said Edith; "and God gives a special grace to those who die, doesn't He? and—"

"What, Edith?" said her mother.

"I was only going to say, mamma, that it must have been so very hard for dear little Eva, who loved life so much, to give it all up; and I suppose God would give a young person especial grace, wouldn't He, to bear the change?"

"As your day, so will your strength be, my child."

Mrs. Talbot read the meaning of those few sentences; but she was one who, early brought up in the blessed school of adversity, had learned to print on everything, "Not my will, but Thine be done."

"Do sit down, Edith," said Mrs. Talbot; "the tea is quite cold."

"Yes, dear mamma," said Edith cheerfully, and acquiescing at once to her mother's wish.

"Here's a letter from your brother," said Mrs. Talbot.

"No! is there?" said Edith, her face lighting up with joy.

Oh, who can say what an only brother is to an only sister! Laertes to Ophelia,—and all this Edward Talbot was to Edith. His absence was always a season of hope and expectation; his arrival the hour of joy and delight.

"Yes, Edith; he proposes to bring, to spend the holidays, the young friend about whom he has so often written—Basil."

"No, does he, mamma? I should like to see him; I've so often wished to see him."

"I will write to Edward to-day," said Mrs. Talbot, "and tell him by all means to bring his young friend with him."

"Oh, dear mamma, I must just go up stairs to fetch a paper to enclose to Edward, which I sat up to write last night."

"I do wish you would not sit up so late, Edith; it is so very bad for you."

But Edith's figure had disappeared before Mrs. Talbot had finished the sentence.

"Oh, my God," said the lady, joining her hands together as she spoke, "if it be Thy blessed will that that dear form should no longer be near me, to gladden and delight my eyes, Thy blessed will be done; only give me grace to bear what only with Thy grace I can endure."

And the tear, so seldom seen on that chastened face, found its way to the clasped hand of the patient and chastened mourner.

The breakfast things were removed, and Mrs. Talbot was writing a letter to her son. It ran in the following terms:

"MY DEAREST CHILD,—It will be a delight to me to see your young friend home with you at your holidays; it was a true cause of joy to me to have found one so worthy of your affection, and so able to provoke you to good works. Friendship, my dearest Edward, in youth, is a most blessed treasure; you may serve as a check upon each other. The eye of a friend is like the eye of God upon us, it shames us from evil and encourages us to good. The weather here is beautiful, and our little garden full of flowers. Your dear sister is far from well, and I cannot say that I have much hope with regard to the future; but 'it is the LORD, let Him do what seemeth Him good;' 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.' Dear Edward! to lie entirely, quietly in the hand of our Heavenly FATHER, and let Him do what

He will with us, is perfect peace. I wish no richer heritage for my beloved boy. Farewell, my blessings go with you.

“Your affectionate Mother.”

By this time Edith had returned to the room, her little package was enclosed with her mother's letter.

“Have you asked his new friend, mamma?” said Edith, as she stood at the open window gazing vacantly on the sunny lawn draped over with veils of gossamers.

“Yes,” said Mrs. Talbot; “I am curious to see his young friend. Edward wanted friendship, he was too reserved.”

“Oh, yes, mamma; dear Edward! he's been a dear brother to me! but yet I always so much regret he will not express himself more fully on things below the surface.”

“You must not hurry him, Edith; God will work His own good work in His own good time. Edward's is a very beautiful character, although as yet it chiefly consists in the fair proportions of its foundation stones.”

“But, dear mamma, do you think it a necessary part of religion to speak of it? What does that verse mean,—‘Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh?’”

“There is no doubt, my Edith, there are persons whose heart is so full of heavenly contemplations, that they can no more restrain them from expression than a fountain can restrain its gushing waters; but with regard to very many persons, I think that earnest expression of religion is simply a sign of uncertainty: there are many who seem to speak their feelings to ascertain whether they have got them at all or not. I have no desire your brother should express any feelings which are not based on the experience of his life.”

“Well, but, dear mamma, how beautifully little Eva used to talk the last few months before she died; she used always to talk of heaven.”

“Yes, Edith, I have no doubt that God gives power to the vent of deep feelings at the approach of death,

and this not only for the sake of benefiting those around, but also to confirm, and strengthen the faith before the last struggle comes."

"Yes, dear mamma," said Edith, thoughtfully, "I believe it firmly, but yet the approach to the dark river must be awful; how cold the mists must rise around one, and how lonely will be the passage! I wish I could get rid of the feeling I have."

"Trust all to Him, my child," said Mrs. Talbot; "I never knew Him fail to take away that alarm of dying from any of His own servants. But never mind, Edith, now, go get your bonnet and come with me to see Mrs. Price, she was very ill yesterday."

The mother and daughter accordingly went forth on their work of love.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE HOLIDAYS.

THREE or four days elapsed before it was the time for Edward's arrival. At length the long wished for day came. Edward's little room had been Edith's care; a small bunch of flowers stood upon his table; a little dog, a spaniel, to which Edward was particularly attached, waited his return.

It was late in the evening before Mrs. Talbot expected Edward and Basil to arrive; all day was spent in preparation and expectation. About half-past seven Edith put on her garden bonnet, and calling the little dog, strolled down the lane in hopes of hearing the sounds of the wheels in the distance. The evening was still and dewy, and the gnats leaped and danced round the tops of the fir-trees in magic circles.

Edith stood listening, when she reached the stile, against which she leaned exhausted even with that short walk. At

length the long wished for distant sound struck upon her ear; the wheels drew nearer and nearer, and at length the sound of the guard's horn sounded clear and still through the spring air.

A romantic affection subsisted between Edith and Edward; a sister to a boy nearly his own age, is past value; she brings him out just at that time of life when the increase of consciousness is bringing out false shame, reserve, suspicion, and awkwardness; a sister softens all this down, and melts the hard outline of boyhood softly off into the tints and tones of surrounding life. When a boy of fifteen begins to kiss his sister from choice, and not by compulsion because his nurse told him, he begins to realise a new state of reciprocated being; he finds he is part of a state of things external to himself which he had never realised before; he has learned the first lessons in humanity when he is courteous and attentive to that sister, and considerate of her interests by inviting her for the first time to visit him at school or college; when he is able to admire her beauties in mind or person, instead of to laugh at or quarrel with her infirmities, and when beyond that he is able to tell her the cares and anxieties of opening life, he has realised a connection, for which there can afterwards be but one substitute, a wife.

Along the dim avenue of coming years the figure by his side is no longer the same as that with which he set out; he acts to the latter on the lesson he learned from the former, and though as we gaze on the receding figures as they pass out at the end of the long dim avenue, the last chosen companion is the one on which he leans in his exit; but the past is never forgotten, and sometimes when the wife is dead the sister returns. All this and more Edith was to Edward.

In five minutes he had sprung from the top of the coach, and Edith is buried in his embrace: the little spaniel leaped and barked around the feet of his beloved master, and Basil stood silently by, unwilling to intrude on a scene of such pure joy and peace.

"Dear Basil, forgive me," said Talbot, as he turned and extended his hand to his friend. "Edith, this is my

very, very dear friend, of whom I have written so often. Basil, you must know and love Edith."

Edith at once frankly and cheerfully went forward and received the chosen friend of her brother: her open, kind, and affectionate manner, the brilliant hectic colour which spread over her otherwise pale and clear complexion; the melting softness of her large blue eye, the negligence with which the long ringlets of her hair were thrown to the back of her head, and her bonnet thrown off, just loosely retained by the fastening which bound it round her neck, fixed Basil's attention. He thought he seldom had seen any one so lovely; he thought Edith was worthy of being Edward's sister, and that was saying much.

The three walked quickly down the lane towards Mrs. Talbot's home, while the dog darted backwards and forwards at Edward's feet in delight at his return. Mrs. Talbot stood waiting at the wicket-gate which led into the churchyard, her quiet and chastened countenance expressing as much joyous excitement as it was ever known to put on; her long grey hair was drawn closely within her widow's cap, and in the depth of her quiet eye you might have read the history of years. She had been beautiful, and the traces of early loveliness were indelibly traced on her face; the next minute, and Edward was in her arms.

"My child!" said Mrs. Talbot: "Thank God we are once more permitted to meet in this life."

They reached the house, the little dog running and barking before them to welcome them home. All was full of joy and peace to Talbot's eye and mind; the garden of his childhood, his mother's calm and never absent love, Edith's pride and admiration for her brother, his own room, with the well known furniture, and the fresh flowers plucked from the garden completed the idea of home.

Basil was at once at home, kindness surrounded him on every side; he had never seen so perfect an idea of peace and happiness before.

A few days after Basil had been under the roof of Mrs. Talbot,—at breakfast one morning she opened

a letter, and laying it down with a smile which showed she had some good news to tell, turned to Edith and said, "Edith, my love, can we manage to have dinner at three this afternoon, and find room for two more people?"

Edith was arranging a large bunch of China roses in a circular blue glass, which Basil had just picked for her, and shaking the dew-drops and lady-birds out of their leaves.

"Oh, yes, mamma," said she, looking back suddenly to shake her head and throw the curls off her eyes; "who is coming?"

"Never mind that," said Mrs. Talbot, with a look that meant she intended to keep her own secret till three o'clock came; "one is a little girl who I know will not be an unwelcome guest."

"Who can it be, I wonder? Don't you wish you knew?"

"I don't know," said Basil, awkwardly.

"Well, I would give the world to know," said Edith.

But Mrs. Talbot would not tell her secret, so the morning passed away.

Edith, and her brother, and Basil had been out for a long walk, in which they had been discussing various topics; they came home carrying with them long bundles of wild flowers, and leaves which they had plucked from the hedges. On reaching the door of the cottage, they became conscious that the expected visitor, whoever it was, had arrived, by the things which were lying in the hall, and the voices which were heard in the dining-room.

Edith threw open the door. Mrs. Talbot was sitting on the sofa near the window: a girl was standing beside her, dressed in mourning; her long fair curls hung over a face which was animated with the most brilliant and intelligent smiles, as she was narrating something to Mrs. Talbot; her eyes were rather pensive and sad, and deeply blue; her complexion was fair and transparent. At the first glance, Talbot and Basil looked at each other; both recognised the stranger. A thousand beautiful thoughts of Willie and his dying hour rushed back on their minds. There was a peculiar loveliness

about Ella, an expression all her own, which at once brought back to the mind everything connected with the past.

How deep are the furrows of association! far down at their lowest depth, the seed of good that happens to drop in, when the furrow is opened, lies treasured to bring forth fruit in an after day. "Where did she come from? Where did she find out Ella?" were the questions put to Mrs. Talbot.

Mrs. Talbot's kind, calm face, lit up with smiles at the perplexity of her young guest; she would not tell them much; all that they could make out was, that Ella had been staying in the neighbourhood with a person whom Mrs. Talbot knew; she had accidentally come across her, and had recognised in her the little girl of whom her son had so often spoken; but Ella was older, and had a deeper expression than that which she had when last they saw her. Willie's death made a deep impression upon her, and had done for her what years and advanced experience do for most people.

Basil started back, and seemed half alarmed at what he had done, when he looked again into her lovely and expressive countenance.

She was Willie's sister, Willie's Ella, and that made him forget all other considerations. The meeting was one of real and pure joy. Poor Ella! she had no home of her own, no friends to love and sympathise with her, and yet it was not hard to see that her heart was formed for affection and human sympathy. She had hardly ever known what it was to love, or be loved, since her mother died and she had lost Willie; but Mrs. Talbot's great kindness, and Basil's and Edward's attachment to her, made her feel she had found a home at last.

It is needless to dilate on the various employments this peaceful family found to pass the sweet, brief, happy days of holidays.

"Oh, dear," said Basil, "what a bore it is to go back to school! what a load of humbug there is in the world! Why shouldn't we do more what we like? What good do I get at school more than I get in scenes like this with

you, Edith, to teach me botany, and with you, Edward, to walk through these beautiful woods, to talk of holier things?" His eyes fell, as he spoke, on Ella's lovely face. He did not add her to his list of enjoyments, though she clearly was one that mingled in no small degree in his happiness of ideal life.

"Well, Edith," said Edward, looking up, "you're the philosopher; of course, you have got something cut and dry to answer why a boy ought to like school."

"What nonsense, Edward," said she, as she unbound a long stream of bindweed which her brother had wound in her dark hair, and flung it on the ground beside her, laughing cheerfully and affectionately in her brother's face. "Why do you always call me a philosopher, Edward?"

"Oh, I don't know," said he; "sisters are always philosophers; are they not? They always live at home with mammas."

"Oh, but you haven't answered my question yet," said Basil. "It seems to me so odd why we should not be more children of nature: what good can there come of always being under restraint, and being thrown amongst those that are wicked, and being under rules and laws which only fetter our best feelings? Do speak, Talbot, you can give a reason, I'll answer for it, if you try, you're such a sensible fellow."

"Well, I don't know," said Talbot; "it does seem odd sometimes, but yet I can feel I've received a great deal of good by going to school and leaving home. But here's mamma coming, and she can answer better than any of us. She knows a lot of life."

Mrs. Talbot's figure was seen approaching them through a glade of the beautiful wood in which they were sitting. The boughs were interlaced over their heads, and the secondary shadows played on the emerald moss on the bank where they sat, while far in the leafy brakes and coves around them, tall flowers wooed the sunshine they could not reach; and in the deep vault, below the lower boughs, insects of all colours gleamed and glittered, as if it were a saloon that nature had built for them: their life a banquet, before evening to be sepulchred in the dust.

Basil lay back, with his arms under his head, gazing up at the mazy beams of sunshine that found their way through the crevices of leaves. Edith sat on the bank, while, partly behind her, Edward lay, constantly worrying her, by trying to make the bindweed cling to her hair. Ella sat at this moment in a small ray of sunshine, weaving a chain of daisies: her bonnet lay on the grass, and some wild-roses clung to her curls, which Basil had fastened.

"And what have I got to settle?" said Mrs. Talbot, approaching the party, and sitting down between Basil and her son. "I would not have you think otherwise than you do," said Mrs. Talbot to Basil, looking at him with an expression he could not quite understand.

"Really," said Basil, starting up, throwing a large handful of moss into Ella's lap. "Well, then, you mean, I'm quite right in the hatred I expressed for the restraints of school life, and longing I feel for the freedom of these woods and glades?"

"No," said Mrs. Talbot, smiling, "that does not follow: you will be totally different when you are my age."

"Oh, no, mamma," said Edward; "everybody talks in that way."

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Talbot, "everyone does talk in that way, and everyone talks in the way which suits their age: it would be unnatural for a young person to love consciously restraints put on the freedom of innocent desires, and I should more than half suspect the young person who professed it, of affectation and unreality."

"I cannot understand what you mean, dear mamma," said Edith, looking very earnestly in her mamma's face, with an expression of perplexity, as she leant her face on her hand: "you do not mean it would be right for a young person to be impatient of control?"

"I never said so, my love," said Mrs. Talbot; "far from it; for I should deeply respect the young person who, while he longed for freedom, which is the natural inheritance of youth, yet patiently submitted to control, saying that he knew it was the ordinance of God, for

some purpose, he would only hereafter perhaps fully know how to value."

"That means me," said Edward.

"And doesn't mean me," said Basil.

"I mean nobody," said Mrs. Talbot: "what I mean is this: you, Basil, have strong and earnest energies in you after good, and you imagine both happiness and usefulness would be found in their unrestrained energy. Suppose, for a moment, the restraint was taken off, and you followed the whole bias of your inclination; you must very soon have them repelled, with a shock which would be fatal to them, if they had been too rapidly put out; the course of events in the world, and the state of human nature will not permit unrestrained energy for good."

"What do you mean?" said Basil: "Are we not to let out all the good feelings we can?"

"Certainly," said Mrs. Talbot; "but with a full expectation and certainty that they will meet with a great recoil."

"Well, but," said Basil, "I don't deny that. How does that go against what I have said, in wishing for greater freedom in my boyhood?"

"Much," said Mrs. Talbot; "if you had that unrestrained feeling, you would only test one portion of your nature; you would never form those moral powers which are the most important parts of us,—patience, perseverance, resignation,—it would be like the exuberant tendency of a vine without a wall to support it; you would never see round or to the depths of your good feelings; you would miscalculate them, and you would be grievously disappointed by experiencing the shocks you had only read and talked of as a romance, and which you had never experienced."

"Very good, mamma," said Edward, pulling up his knees with his hands clasped round them, and throwing himself back on the mossy bank; "that's just like you: always wise and right in the end. Basil, your exuberance was Willie's death, and the east wind that nipped it were Dance and Crawshay and the loss of the scholarship: they were your world, your youthful world,—were they not, mamma?" said Talbot, springing up, and throwing

his cap into the air. "It would be a glorious thing if half mankind went through their world half as nobly and gallantly as Basil went through his. If he didn't build the wall for his own vine, he has let his boughs be nailed to the wall built for him."

"Nonsense, Edward," said Basil, with a sigh, as he went on throwing moss into Ella's lap, and she piled it into little pyramids on the turf.

"Look at that bird," said Mrs. Talbot, pointing to a bird that was just springing from the high grass in the field, "that bird springs up with an energy which will be soon driven back when it gets beyond the trees and boughs; it doesn't expect the current of air it will presently meet, it will be soon driven back; it's a young bird, too, it can hardly fly."

They all watched the bird: it was a lark, a young lark, it flew as high as the top of the trees. A dark cloud containing hail, with a sudden gust of wind, came up, and the bird was beaten back to the grass from which it sprung.

"Soon beaten back, dear mamma," said Edith, with a sigh.

"Yes, my beloved child," said Mrs. Talbot, fixing her eyes on her daughter, "such will be all those who are not prepared in youth for after-life, and in time for eternity."

"My children," said Mrs. Talbot, when, having reached the garden, the storm had passed by; "my own path through life has been so chequered with the shadows of what is commonly called adversity, that I may be rather a melancholy monitor to you; but, rely on it, what I say is true: the only way to heaven is by having the entire Will brought under God's yoke. Many a disposition naturally yields to Him, and they have but little trouble; but, amongst the holiest of men, have been those whose dispositions have clung tenaciously to this world; they need and will have constant checks."

But the holidays drew to a close; Basil's heart had clung with all the tenacity of his affections round the family of his friend. Mrs. Talbot had been to him more than a mother. Could he ever forget those long, long

talks, as she sat with her quiet countenance under the spreading boughs of the walnut tree on the lawn, while he lay at her feet on the daisied grass, listening to the wise words which many years in the school of sorrow brought from her lips? Could he ever forget those morning nosegays he used to gather for Edith before breakfast, when he went out under the radiant loveliness of the cloudless June morning, and stand and gaze on the sunny side of the hedge, from whose coloured carpet hundreds of insects danced and mused in the mystic heat? Then he would go and gather little nosegays of roses, sweet-peas, and mignonette, and then take them to Edith as she came down to the breakfast table; and would listen with delight to her sweet, kind voice, uttering her thanks. Could he ever forget those long, long walks beneath the twilight, through the hay-fields, and along the greenswards of cool, dewy lanes, with Edith and Edward, and Ella by their side? every now and then camping among the hay-cocks, and watching the gnats, as without a sound they sailed up, with their tiny black wings outspread against the glow of the twilight, as if they were quiet spirits come to gaze at what was going on in the world beyond the distance. Edith used to love all that so, and Basil loved it with her; and then the air used to be so full of the smell of hay seeds, and great evening moths would come sailing by with fiery eyes, which made Ella start; and Edith used to declare she believed they were great giants or sorcerers changed into that shape as a punishment,—so awful they were, and mysterious. Then at last they would get home, and find Mrs. Talbot waiting at the tea-table, with the windows open down to the ground, and the lamp on the table, with moths flying into the chimney; and the tea-urn, with the great cloud of steam; and the cups with the scarlet pattern and golden rims; and the little dog, with his long silky hair, and his head lying down between his paws, as if listening to every sound; and Edith's harp standing near the wall, with its shadow painted on the paper; as they came in through the open window, Mrs. Talbot would say, "Later and later; where have you been to-night?"

Could Basil forget all that?—never. How intensely happy life seemed to Basil! how he dreaded the idea of Crawshaw, Stocker, and Dance! But would he ever forget one morning, as he entered the breakfast-room, Mrs. Talbot met them with a grave face, and looking round the table, said,

“My children,” for she always called Basil her child, “I have got sad news this morning; but His blessed Will be done: I never knew Him to order anything which was not blessed on the other side. Edward, my beloved boy,” said she, trying to check the tear that would rise to interrupt her speech, “I have just got a letter from your uncle, in which he tells me he has got you a commission to India, as a cadet; and, my child, you must go to India immediately, as there is no time to be lost.”

Oh, what a blank! On whom, of those round the table, did it fall the most heavily? Mrs. Talbot would most likely never see him again; her age and growing infirmities told her that, when Edward returned from India, his first visit would be to his mother's grave. Edith, poor Edith! what idolizing respect and affection she had circled round that one brother! As Mrs. Talbot's eye implied as she looked up suddenly at Edith, that hectic colour fleeting from her cheek told but too surely that she would never see, in all probability, that brother again. And Basil—imagine going back to school without Talbot; imagine the dull, heavy work he would have to endure!

The whole party sat lost in silence and in thought; none seemed to bear to break the spell. Edward was the first who was able to command himself to speak, and turning to his mother, he said, “It is the plain path of duty; God's will be done!” But as his eye gradually passed round the table, and fell on each beloved countenance, poor Edward's courage forsook him; he again fixed his eye rigidly on his plate, and played with it with his knife.

It is of no use dwelling on the painful sadness which followed; no bright summer sun was able to dispel it. To them the cable seemed cut which bound the vessel of

their happy life to the shore; their bowl was broken at the cistern; the silver cord severed.

It was the last night before he went. All the boxes and trunks were packed and corded; everything was ready to go. The window of Basil's little room was wide open; it was past eleven o'clock at night. The moon was shining in at the window, full on the white dimity curtains of the bed, and the simple furniture of Basil's bed-room. Basil sat at the table close to the window; his head rested on his two arms, which were folded on the table; his jacket was off. He seemed absorbed in grief.

The door gently opened, and Edward Talbot entered. He quietly knelt down by the side of his friend, and taking his hand in his, pressed it to his lips. The moon shone in full on the calm, manly, and now beautiful countenance of Edward Talbot; on that noble eye, which expressed disinterestedness, generosity, and high principle; the idol alike of his home and his school. Neither spoke for some time.

"Basil," said Edward, at last, "we must say good-bye, at last; let us do so as Christians should. We have loved each other, dear Basil, more than most boys at school or home; and how shall I ever repay you the debt I owe you?"

"The debt you owe me!" said Basil, starting up from the table: "Talbot, what do you mean? Imagine what I owe you; your kind, kind friendship, your noble and beautiful example."

Poor Basil burst into tears, and threw his face down again on his arm on the table.

"Ah, well," said Talbot, "it is a good thing that one never knows what he does himself. It was your earnest religion, Basil, that first turned my cold, stony, statue-like character into a warm picture; to you I owe the knowledge of real religion, and I shall never find another."

Basil pressed closely the hand he held in his; he could not speak, but that pressure meant, "Where shall I find another?"

"I had a word or two to say," said Edward, "Do,

when you go back to Dobson's, try and keep things straight. Take my place there, Basil; there is many a boy there, I know for certain, that is inclined to take a good line. I know the seed of that dear Willie's death, sown on all the soil of the school, is springing up on all sides; it must be watered and warmed by prayer and good example. There is many a boy now says his prayers that never did before; and that is all Willie's harvest. God bless his dear soul! Keep it up, Basil, by your own firm, quiet, and consistent line, the key-stone to the arch. I fear there is not much apparent hope of Dance, in spite of all his promises. They say 'the sunshine cannot raise the flower that blooms on a blighted bough,' and he was blighted enough before Willie's sunshine shone upon him: but, never mind, God is all-sufficient."

There was another pause. "There was another thing I had to say; come and see my dear mother and Edith." But here his voice broke down quite.

"I don't think I shall see either of them again. But they will love to see you, Basil, because you will remind them of me. I don't think Edith will live long," said he, half talking to himself; "it will break my mother's heart; but I know her Will is in tune with God's Will. I could say a great deal more, dear Basil, but I don't know how to say it. Let us say good-bye now, Basil, and not renew the parting. I go at four in the morning, and let us have the last scene as we are now."

And they did say good-bye; a long, long good-bye, Basil and Talbot. Oh, in years to come, could Basil ever forget that little room, and the moon through that open window!

The next morning the breakfast party was sad indeed. Edward Talbot was gone. Everything and everybody seemed to feel it; the little dog was unwilling to run barking to the door to greet Edith on her entrance in the morning; something was wrong which even he discovered. Mrs. Talbot's face still bore the same expression of calmness, but it looked worn and haggard; she evidently had gone through a great struggle in her

parting with her son. Edith looked sad, gazed vacantly out of the window, and played melancholy tunes with her fingers on the table-cloth. Only one warm feeling seemed to touch Basil's heart; that he was left as a brother to Edith, and as a son to Mrs. Talbot.

A few days passed before he had to part to go to school; but that sad day at last arrived. "Oh, what will school be without Talbot!" He felt unsheltered, unsupported; he prayed earnestly to God for guidance under the difficulty; prayed that he might take a bolder line for His glory: and God did support him with grace for his work.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE COACH.

BASIL went back by a night coach; it was a wet, drizzling night, and very cold; he was outside. There were four other boys on the top of the coach, all going to Mr. Dobson's: all were wrapped up in cloaks, to keep out the wet and cold. Four horses dashed and galloped on over wolds and commons, and Basil became aware of the pace, as every now and then he woke up from sleep, always dreaming of Talbot, and Edith, and Ella. Whenever he woke, he became first conscious of the bitter cold and rain, then of the guard's lamp, which shot along the road in the dark night, making the horses look small as a miniature, or the figures in a magic lantern.

"Have you heard Talbot's left?" said one of the boys behind Basil on the top of the coach.

"No; really, I'm sorry for that! he *was* a fellow," said a young voice in answer, which Basil recognised.

"Who'll be cock of the school now?" said a third; "do you think it'll be Basil?" For they had not as yet

recognised Basil, wrapped up in his cloak, as he did not wish to be communicative.

"I don't know," said the first speaker; "he isn't the tenth part of Talbot."

"That's pleasant," thought Basil; and he felt very cold and comfortless, thinking of all he had lost. How very, very dear Mrs. Talbot seemed to him at that moment! how chilly and cold the prospect of school! how he yearned for a point in life!

The conversation behind him still went on, with an Attic salt and laconic terseness peculiar to schoolboys.

"It's a pity Crawshay's expelled," said the second speaker; "he *was* a cock."

"Stunning," was the answer.

"But he deserved it, I think," said the third; "not sorry he's gone. Basil will do better than he; he is a fellow of real principle."

"Yes, that he is," said the second.

"Ah, he is that," said the first.

"That's a comfort," thought Basil, "anyhow; they've got an impression, I think, I hardly deserve that; I wish I heartily could my duty."

"Talbot is such a brave fellow," said number two.

"Basil isn't that," said number one and number three simultaneously; "he's a bit of a coward; I doubt if the fellows will follow him as they followed Talbot. Old Dobson won't respect him so much."

"I'll wipe out that stain from my escutcheon," thought Basil, "on the first opportunity."

It was blowing cold, and intensely dark at this moment, which created a silence for a minute or two in their conversation; and all of them began to draw their cloaks tighter round their throats.

"Hollo!" said a fellow from behind, "have you fellows got a weed there in front?"

This was the circumstance that made them aware that at the last place they stopped to change horses half a dozen more of their fellows had got up behind.

"Hollo! are you there, old fellow?—a weed? ah, ten, if you like!"

"I say," said the well-known voice of Dance, "isn't it

a bore, Crawshaw and Stocker expelled? We won't have that fellow Basil as a cock, you know."

"I wonder what day he'll return?" said number one in front.

"Oh, he's been there these three days; I know it from Billy Warner, who wrote and told me."

"Really," thought Basil to himself, "that's news!"

"He's sneaking round old Dobson, trying to get him to make him captain; just like the fellow!"

"Ah!" said number three, as he leant across to give the tinder-box to Dance, to light his weed.

Dance puffed and puffed, and at last puffed a light into the cigar.

"That's enough, old fellow," said he.

"Ah," said number three, taking back the tinder-box.

"I say, old fellow," said Dance, taking out his cigar, and knocking it against the rim of the next boy's hat;

"I say, did you see old Wimpkins get inside, the last place we changed horses at?"

"No," said numbers one, two, three, simultaneously. "Fancy old Wimpkins!"

"Yes," said Dance; "he's got his aunt's shawl on, to protect him from the inclemency of the weather. Poynder, here, swears he had a bonnet on."

"Call him at the window," said number one.

"Oh, he won't put his dear head out into the rain; it'll melt, like a piece of lump sugar."

"Do call him," said Poynder; "it'll be such a spree."

Dance leant over the luggage on the top of the coach, and got his face towards the north of the window. "I say, Wimpkins, old fellow, are you asleep?"

"Oh, dear, no," said a muffled voice inside, "not in the least asleep; I'm enjoying myself immensely."

The fact was he had got two maiden ladies inside, placed under his protection, friends of his mother's; Miss Stirling, and Miss Arabella Stirling.

"There's nothing the matter, I hope?" shrieked Miss Stirling, as Dance leant over the window; and she immediately let down the window to look out.

"My dear, it's impossible; you'll give me my death!" said Miss Arabella, immediately pulling up the window.

"My dear, you're infatuated," said Miss Stirling; "I saw the horses running away." And she immediately put down the window.

"My dear Mr. Wimpkins, "will you interfere?" said Miss Arabella, trying to pull the window up again.

"My dear Mr. Wimpkins, will you look out? I'm sure the horses are running away," said Miss Stirling, keeping her hand firmly on the window, to prevent her sister pulling it up. Poor Wimpkins!

At this moment they were passing over a wide and wild common, intersected with gravel-pits and ditches; the wind was blowing hurricanes, and it was pitch dark. The off leader made a start at a white post by the side of the road; off went all four as hard as they could tear; in half a minute they were completely beyond the control of the coachman. Now, Basil, is your chance; redeem your character, and establish yourself for ever as captain in the school.

The intense darkness of the night, and the vicinity of the ditch and of the common, made the position of the coach extremely perilous; the coach swung from side to side of the road with frightful velocity, while that peculiar jerking motion given by the separate efforts of the horses, convinced every one that they were beyond the power of the coachman.

Dance and his companions first began by hallooing and shouting, but they soon became silenced by the awe of their position, and caught tight hold of the narrow iron rim round the top of the coach, which was necessary to keep them from being flung off into the wold. The intense darkness, which hung like a curtain over the waste of the common, made the scene still more awful. One moment the coach was on the one side wheels, the next moment on the other. Away they went, as fast as the furious beasts could carry them.

At last the sudden jerk of the coach sent the coachman

off the box; he pitched on his head by the road side. The coach gave just sufficient swerve for those upon it to notice his figure as it struck against the road, and to hear the blow with which his head, coming in collision with a large flint, was crushed in, and he was left a lifeless corpse in the darkness.

Basil caught the reins; there was not a moment's hesitation in his manner. He flung off his hat and his cloak, that he might see clearer. Twice the coach was on the verge of upsetting, and twice Basil, by his presence of mind and skill, guided the horses off the point of danger. All the minds of those present were fixed on him, in whose hands their destiny depended. A low whispered murmur ran round the top of the coach, as they clung tight with clammy hands to the iron bars, "It's Basil!" They could see his dark figure sitting on the high cushion, just bending forward to ascertain more exactly the position in which they were placed. The sight of the coachman's figure, as it dashed against the flint on the road side, sent a thrill of terror through every heart; each expected every moment that would be his own fate, when at length the grinding and crushing sound of the heavy wheels of a waggon advancing towards them in the darkness, told them how increasing was the imminence of their danger. Now, Basil, all depends on you!

At the next onward jerk of the leaders, the huge dark form of the waggon loomed in sight; the slightest touch of the coach wheel on the waggon must have sent them all off, and many into eternity. On dashed the furious animals, conscious at having got an unaccustomed hand with the reins.

Had Basil for one instant lost his presence of mind, and constant sense of God's all-present power, all must have been lost. There was just width in the road, and only just; and so dexterous was Basil's skill, that he skimmed without touching the wheels of the waggon.

"Pray, pray stop!" cried two or three voices from behind; "don't be so mad!"

"Hold for your life, sir, and don't move!" cried the strong voice of the guard.

"Oh, he's gone! he's gone! he's killed!" cried two or

three voices at once, as Poynder, in the extremity of his terror, tried to get off the coach behind. No persuasion could stop him. He first caught hold of one rim, then a thong of leather; at the next instant he was dashed to the earth.

On rolled the coach. A high, steep hill was now before them, and Basil took the horses slap against its breast.

"Well done!" cried two or three half breathless voices behind him.

"Thank God!" sighed two or three more, as against the steep side of the hill the exhausted horses began evidently to flag; but Basil lashed them on, until, fairly exhausted, the off leader fell; the extreme steepness of the hill, and the slower impetus of the wheel, brought the coach to a stand-still, and all was safe.

In a moment all were off and out of the coach, and every one crowding round Basil, indeed the hero of that night's adventure. His heart overflowed with gratitude to God. What words could say the effect that one awful quarter of an hour had on Basil in after life? How happily he had reversed the decree passed on the coach a few minutes before, of his lack of spirit! He was now a hero; his courage, his firmness, his presence of mind, was the universal talk of the school. He owed it all to a firm and prayerful faith in God: not naturally possessed of physical courage, religion made him a lion.

But the awe of that night made a deep impression on all their minds; they went back, and found poor Poynder lying, not dead, but awfully hurt. He never returned to school, but was laid up for a long time at home, and was for the future a cripple. The coachman was found with his skull fractured, lying with his back to the dark night sky; he was quite dead.

"Why do not these many solemn events change my heart?" said Dance, with an honestly drawn sigh.

"Because," said Basil, "you trust to feelings, not grace."

CHAPTER XXVI.

DEATH.

BASIL owed everything to this incident. The first morning when he came into the school after his return, he was received with universal respect. He had adorned religion. What a mistake it is when boys think that religion is inconsistent with, or may be dispensed with for the common moral attributes of courage, generosity, and honour!

Basil, as may be imagined, felt most keenly the loss of Talbot; he very soon found there was little difficulty in ascertaining his position. The boys yielded to him the palm of superiority, and he soon became so interested in his schemes for elevating the tone of the school, that he at times wholly forgot his isolated and solitary position. An incident soon occurred which called out both his principles and his firmness.

It would be impossible to describe all the minute points of daily life in which Basil's influence in the school came out. In some respects he held a more direct one than Talbot: his nature was more sympathising, and his self-confidence greater. Not that direct influence is always the best, or that self-conscious people are always best to influence others; they are rather famous for the green-house and hot-bed work, than open air; for rearing exotics and hybrids, more than the simple produce of the soil. They are always trying to perpetuate self, and to judge every one by the standard of self; they are never satisfied till they have brought the feelings of all those around them into exact unison with their own, and this can only be done by forcing: but where such characters have disciplined themselves, and corrected their own weaker tendencies, none are so likely as they are to do lasting and effectual good; and such, to a great degree, was Basil's character. In fact, the generation of boys who were at school with him had been very much prepared for a more developed school of religion under Tal-

bot's fostering hand; and Basil's more direct work was needed, after the indirect one of his friend.

Little things—and those little things were the best tests—told on all sides the good he was doing: regular attendance at the Holy Communion; the great reverence of manner in Church and at prayers; the great alteration in the habit of swearing, which really now was done in a corner, as the boys were ashamed of it; the much higher tone of the feelings on all matters connected with honour and integrity, showed how Basil was doing his work. His own character had become so compacted by disappointment and early troubles, that he was well suited to his responsible and important position; and there are few positions more responsible and important than the head of a large school. He can influence for good or for evil far more widely than the master can; for he knows the boys in their unguarded moments, and sees them when their inner being is laid open to observation. His influence is effective over an age most available and impressible; his smile of scorn or look of approbation is often the impetus which drives on the chariot wheels of another, without pausing, to the precipice of the grave. How glorious is the path of that boy, who, having exercised an influence like this at school, in after life may come across those whom he has affected! and at the day of judgment may meet many who, in the tempted hours of life, have owed to his word or example the resistance of temptation or the choice of holiness!

It was Thursday afternoon, a half holiday, and Basil was walking with two other boys along a winding lane in the neighbourhood of the school, at the end of which stood a cottage, where a poor youth was dying whom Basil had been in the continual habit of visiting, for the purpose of reading to him, and bringing to him little requisites which he could not otherwise get.

They had not walked far before they were overtaken by a party on horseback, in the centre of which was Mr. Morton with his pupils; young Enderby was still there.

"Ah! how do you do, Basil? how do you do, Askew?" said he, as he nodded carelessly to the three boys.

“Have you seen the hounds go this way? we hear they are out.”

“No,” said Basil, “we have not.”

He was conscious of the contemptuous look which Mr. Morton usually gave to Basil as well as to those that were with him.

Having gained but little information from them, Mr. Morton rode on in quest of the hunt.

“How high those fellows hold their heads!” said Basil to Askew.

In the course of a few minutes, Basil and his companions reached the cottage where he was going. A sick youth lay on a bed out in the garden, whose pale face and emaciated body told in a moment volumes as to his condition; he received Basil with a smile of delight, of that kind which only those are rewarded with who, in the words of the Scripture, “visit the sick and the needy.”

Basil had burst through that miserable and unreal atmosphere which surrounds schoolboys, which would lead them to imagine that in proportion as they visited or relieved the sick and poor, they were sinking in creation: why should the act that ennoble the man be contradictory to the act that ennoble the boy? why should the man of forty be honoured for doing the very thing his own boy of fourteen is laughed at for doing even by his elders and betters? the child is father to the man, and surely the discipline of boyhood should be to form the earlier habits which are to clothe him in manhood. How many a home is there in which poverty and want, sickness and anxiety, stalk through the open doorway or the broken window through the long months of dreary winter, round our great public and private schools beneath whose roofs the heirs of the noble, and the children of the merchant prince, are allowed to squander their petty fortunes on the trifles of an hour, when if only those above them would enact that it should be honourable for them to imitate angels instead of devils, they might form streams of comfort and relief into channels, along which now the fiery flood of human suffering flows: nay, more, the boys of our great schools, instead of being the

relievers of woe and want, are only known in the homes that rise around them as the panderers to dishonesty, the applauders of blasphemy, the seducers of purity.

There is no subject that seems to be more misrepresented than schoolboy's charity: there are many who represent our public schoolboys as the type of generosity and disinterestedness in almsgiving for no other reason than because they are willing to relieve a drunken impostor, who calls himself a sailor, professing to have been wrecked on some inhospitable shore, and who can show one shrivelled arm, and another tattooed one, who can swear twenty oaths in a breath, blaspheme God, and slander his fellow-creatures; and for this miserable spectacle of humanity troops of noble-minded lordlings and high-minded schoolboys will give up weeks of mutton-pies, and countless luxuries, pour their pence into his ragged hat, and think themselves, and are counted by others, noble and generous for doing it. But still more perhaps are the sensitive feelings of schoolboys excited by the pathetic sight of a worn-out jockey, with a black velvet jacket, and a faded scarlet coat, who walks quick, with an impudent stare in his eye, and a rapid movement in his right arm, his nose purple with drunkenness, and his face emaciated with disease; at this heart-rending spectacle the school-gates are thronged by generous alms-givers, who thrust their shillings on the greedy recipient; and we hear at the next dinner-party of the noble-souled and high-minded generosity of our schoolboys, which amounts to a little more than this: they would gladly relieve the devil, if starving, and pass by an archangel without notice, for quite as keen as is the sense of pity for the above-described objects, is the sense of shame felt at the bare idea of relieving the necessitous, and craving compassion for the fatherless and widow. Many is the boy who coming from his home with honest feelings of compassion for the patient poor is laughed to scorn by his companions, and crushed by the public spirit of the school if he should venture for a single moment to let his generous, honest benevolence have its vent; an oath or the mark of profligacy are the best passports from the beggar to the boy.

This feeling Basil had tried to overcome in the school, and had succeeded; there were three or four cases of great distress among the youths in the neighbourhood; one of scrofula, whose real need of the necessities of life, or whose long hours of wearisome loneliness offered a natural and fitting scope for the exertions and sympathies of a youth; he had been a servant at the school. It was to his cottage Basil was going on the day we described above. The clergyman of the parish worked hard, but the poor were many, and the rich few, and he thankfully gave Basil and his companions a work to do in visiting some of his sick and poor.

Basil had just lifted the latch of the gate, and was approaching the bed, which, drawn out into the porch, enabled the wan and faded sufferer who lay propped on his pillow, to have those last and valued visions of the loveliness of the world he was about to leave, which the sick alone know how to appreciate and enjoy: the bees, and the birds, the old cottage shrubs; the trees whose slumbrous noise seemed as if the leaves talked in their sleep, the prattling brook that ran bubbling over pebbles, as if in a hurry to carry some village gossip from one end to the other of the quiet parish; above all, the sound of the old church bells, which, practised so often in the summer's evening, sounding like the voices of those dear ones, whom we loved long ago, calling us with plaintive kindness from the sky to which their souls had gone: all these dear to us all; oh, how much more dear to those whose eyes and ears notice them for the last time, and to whom they are as earthly, and sad farewells to the poor guest of mortality who has tarried but a day! It was into this scene that the poor youth was just drawn out by his mother as Basil came up the path. His sunken cheek lit up with a smile of delight as he saw his kind and constant friend approach him.

"Halloo, my little saint," cried a voice, as Basil approached his patient. "Always on some mission of heavenly mercy," cried the well-known voice of Crawshay, when Basil looked round and those with him, they saw the form of Crawshay mounted on a hunter dressed in

pink with other companions, all of whom seemed to join in the laugh.

"Are none of you coming with us? the hounds are out, and Enderby and Mr. Morton are out. What a sheepish set you are at Dobson's! you never know what fun is. Can't you answer a fellow, Mr. Basil, when he asks a civil question?" cried Crawshay, getting into a rage at finding he received no answer from the object of his ridicule.

"I'm not coming to-day," said Basil; "I've got other work to do."

"What, going to pray and sing Psalms!" cried Crawshay, in a loud and satirical voice.

The colour mounted to Basil's face, and he bit his lip; he had a proud spirit of his own, and Crawshay's insolent manner, added to the remembrance of many former injuries, roused his indignation almost beyond control.

Crawshay must have been under the excitement of strong drink; for he was not one who would transgress the limits of a gentleman: but with another loud burst of laughter, interspersed with words uttered by Crawshay, in which "methodist, fool, and cant" bore a large proportion, the hunting-party passed on their way.

Basil paid his visit to the dying sufferer, and soon forgot, in the delight of giving comfort to the unhappy, the annoyed feeling created by the scoffs of his enemy. Oh, why should youth be educated in the school of un-reality! why should the noblest sympathies of our nature be ignored and forbidden by forms and fashions of society, which insist on opening a pathway different from that which God has made! The world's high road through the path they open is the valley and the shadow of death; while on the other path gleam the glorious beams of the Sun of Righteousness.

It was growing late ere Basil had left the garden, and he and his companions retraced their quiet way back to the school. The dews of evening were taking the place of the more arid warmth of the early spring afternoon; and on the high hedge-row under which they walked the wild roses tossed their frolicking forms on high, as if to tantalise the grasping hands of village

school-children. Huge moths of the evening, and the warlike music of the cockroach and the gnats, as if the troops of night were coming out to scatter the conquered hosts of day, induced Basil and his companions to linger somewhat longer on their evening walk. They turned a corner suddenly, which brought them on to a common, which was transected by the road. Here, to their surprise, they saw a large gathering of their school companions, together with a great number of village people, who all seemed waiting, expecting some event.

The loud sound of the voices in the distance soon told that the return of the huntsmen and the dogs was the object of their interest. The loud voice of Crawshay was distinctly heard in violent altercation with some one riding beside him. The violent oaths which flowed from the mouth of the blasphemer made the blood of many curdle in their veins. He seemed in violent dispute, and highly excited.

"I tell you I will!" said he; "I'll lay a wager of ten to six."

"Done!" said the other.

"Stop, stop, stop!" was the cry all round; "don't be such a fool and madman!"

It was seen in a moment what was the object of the wager. A high stone wall fenced off a field from the common; Crawshay, with his tired horse, had been dared to leap it; but drunk, furious, and excited, he would brook no daring; and, without looking to see the nature of the ground on the other side, he plunged his spurs suddenly into the sides of his jaded beast, so that the wearied animal made a violent and sudden start under the anguish of the stroke, and plunged furiously forward. A yell of horror burst from the lips of all that were gathered on the common. A gravel-pit, full fifteen feet deep, lay close under the wall on the common side; the wretched youth never saw it. The animal took the leap with a violent effort, and cleared the top of the wall. As the creature's legs were drawn up under its belly in the act of springing, the miserable youth saw, too late, the awful doom that awaited him on the other side: down,

like a thunderbolt, came the horse, and with him down came Crawshay. He was flung from the saddle; his foot caught in the stirrup; he lay motionless, his neck was fearfully injured; and his staring eyes and blackened features grinned up to heaven.

In a moment a large crowd had gathered round the bodies of horse and man. Basil was the first to reach Crawshay, to lift up the head and face, on which the agony of death was stereotyped with its awful gripe.

"Make way! make way!" cried a voice from the crowd, as a huntsman made his way towards the spot.

"Let me look at him," said the voice of the jockey, as he pushed back Basil, and seized the head of the dying hunter. The suffocating struggle for life, the distorted shadowy features, the sweat drops that broke out from his livid forehead, the staring eyes over which the eyelids seemed unable to close,—all of them succeeding so rapidly the colour of health and vigour of life struck every one with intense awe.

The huntsman had placed the head of Crawshay between his knees, and seizing hold of the head and keeping down the lower part of the body with his knees, he tried to remedy the fearful damage, and death was for a few minutes suspended; but the iron grasp of his finger closed round the unprepared profligate with a power which was not in human aid to resist.

Taking up the unfortunate youth, they carried him to the nearest cottage, which was standing on the edge of the common; and placing him on a bed, the little room was soon filled with those who were anxious to see the result of the awful accident. The wretched creature opened his eyes and his lips immediately uttering an oath, and stared wildly round the group.

"Oh, for the kind God's sake," said Basil, "don't, don't swear now! you will meet God presently."

Crawshay stared at Basil, gave a frown, and then a mock laugh, and said audibly the words, "You little fool!"

At that moment the surgeon, who had been stopped as he was riding by, made his way towards the bed; a very short investigation assured him, from the injury.

done to the throat, that life could not hold out more than half an hour.

"I think, sir," said the surgeon, "if this young gentleman has any friends, they ought to be sent for immediately: I can give no hope whatever of his life beyond the next half hour."

Basil immediately commissioned two of the boys of his own company to take the mournful news to his father: consequently, Mr. Crawshay returned in about ten minutes.

Basil stood as near as he could to the dying sufferer, hoping that he might drop some word of warning or comfort into his ear.

Crawshay showed every aversion to the attempt to speak to him. All eyes were intently fixed on the awful figure with which so many, who were there, had joined in life in making a mock at goodness and encouraging vice.

By this time the clergyman had come, and striven in vain to draw Crawshay's mind to any sense of his condition: every effort that was tried was in vain.

"Shall I pray?" said the Minister of God, approaching the awful scene of the unprepared death.

"Pray?" said Crawshay, starting up from his pillow, with a harsh sepulchral tone which borrowed its unnatural expression from the injury in the throat: "Pray? What do you mean?" said he, looking at Basil fixedly as he spoke: "Give me my whip! Don't you see the brute is sticking in the clay, and won't take the leap, and I shall be killed?" said he, laying violently hold of Basil's arm with his hand, and throwing a violent emphasis into the last words of the sentence: "Killed, and go to hell for ever, where there's not a drop of cold water, eh?" said he, "Give me my whip, to make the brute take the leap; can't any of you help a poor fellow in an extremity?" And he swept his eyes round the room with a stare, that made the younger boys huddle together into the corner and wish themselves anywhere but there; and he uttered a horrible oath, and sunk back again on the pillow.

"Oh, Crawshay, Crawshay!" said Basil, "do listen to what the clergyman is saying."

The clergyman a second time approached the bed and said the solemn words of Scripture: "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive."

"Get away, you old fool," said the youth, springing up with one of the last expiring efforts of life; "away with your cant."

Many in the room shuddered, and some of the profligate who had gathered round him, made inward vows of reformation.

"Oh, Crawshay!" cried Basil, still keeping close to the bed, his earnest soul not letting him hold his peace, "do let us all pray for you; do say, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner!' pray, do."

"What do you mean?" said Crawshay, staring vacantly at Basil. "I don't know what you mean; I belong to the devil, not to God: I won't have any of your Methodism here."

At this moment, a quick footstep was heard in the adjoining room. Crawshay seemed at once to recognise the step, and starting up, uttered the word, "Father!" as the door opened and Mr. Crawshay entered.

It was a dreadful scene between the parent and the child. Mr. Crawshay was an elderly man, the outlines of whose face, harsh and severe, gave an unpleasant impression to all who saw him; the expression of his eye was cold and suspicious, it was like that of one who had thoroughly seen the world, seen through it and despised it; he approached the bedside of the dying sufferer with that embarrassment which would be accounted for, not only by the numbers in the room, but by the awful consciousness that not one passage in the life of his eldest boy had paved the way to this solemn moment; there was not one sentence that he could remember at that terrible moment having uttered to him, whose echoes would be remembered for good beyond the barriers of time and the grave. A tear trembled on the old man's rugged cheek, and emotion made his voice quiver, as he said, "Oh, my poor boy!"

"Hollo, father!" said Crawshay.

"What's the matter exactly?" said Mr. Crawshay,

looking round the room for an answer on the many faces that surrounded him, and evidently appalled himself and awe-struck at the scene.

Basil explained as briefly as he could the incidents of the last hour.

"I am going to eternal ruin," said Crawshay, looking at his father with a glance of eternal hatred. "And little is it that you have done to save me from it."

"I hope not, I hope not," said Mr. Crawshay: "I hope you are not going to die."

"Die, and be buried, father," said Crawshay; "die and be buried, and go you know where, because you never taught me better." And again he finished his sentence with an oath. But as he spoke, the exertion he had used to utter his blasphemy, dislocated again some portion of the throat which had received so severe an injury, and with an appalling shriek he died.

His unclosed eye kept staring on his father's face; his parting lips were pinched and drawn in the agony of the last effort; his fingers which, in the convulsion of that instant, had caught tight hold of the sheet, remained rigid in their death-grasp.

"Oh, pray God! pray God!" said the old man dropping on his knee before the bed, and burying his face in his hands: "he's not dead, don't say he's dead, and with a curse upon his lips;" and he looked round with a piteous expression, as if waiting for the answer that did not come, that his son lived. Again his eye encountered the terrible expression of the dead face, and again his face sunk buried in his hand.

The clergyman now knelt down, and all in the room followed his example; and he offered up, in a solemn manner, the LORD'S Prayer. It was indeed an awful occasion, one never to be forgotten by those present; and many a one there made an inward resolution that, from that day forward, they would so live that they might meet death with hope.

One by one the younger boys crept out of the room, horror-stricken at the sight; never was to be effaced from their remembrance the drunkard's and the swearer's death.

When they reached Mr. Dobson's, it was very late. A deep impression of solemnity pervaded the school; and never since Talbot first began to exercise an influence there had the moral effect of a single example been felt, as in Basil's case to-night. Every eye seemed fixed on him, as the centre and pillar of the school. Never had the LORD'S Prayer, at the evening prayers at that school, been uttered with such earnest and united voices; never were the faces of all present so reverent and grave; and even Dance, as he rose to leave the room, stretched out his hand to Basil, and grasped Basil's in his own.

Three or four of the young boys, as they reached the door, stopped and whispered amongst each other, and then came back and said in a low, tremulous voice, to Basil, "We want you to come and say our prayers for us; for we think God will hear you, and we are so frightened."

Happy Basil! who would not on that night change places with you, exercising an influence over every heart in that school, and being able to look up to God and say, "My God, it is all for Thee."

It was late ere Basil lay down on his pillow to sleep, watching, as he did, the full white light of the moon as it played through the white curtains of his bed, and shone through the window, like the smile of God: in perfect peace, he was soon asleep.

Under that moonlight, when the iron tongue of time told one that night, two figures lay in stillness; the one in the magnificent and solitary chamber of Mr. Crawshay's wealthy house, in the centre of an ample bed: that figure lay with a sheet thrown over the face, through whose thin surface the rigid features protruded of him who lay beneath; and when that sheet might have been removed by the hand of a watcher, a silent moonbeam would have shone on the cold fixed face of death, the furrow of anguish on the settled brow, and the teeth that were clenched in the last gasp of despair. The room was still; the spider dropped his web from the corner of the ample bed, and the tiny shadow of the little animal paced over the still white face; the mouse played his silent antic in the empty room, and the death-watch ticked on

the quiet hearth. In that room the moon shone on a schoolboy, the aim of whose life and the point of whose death had been to mock at God.

But in that other room, on the peaceful countenance of happy slumber, on the quiet, regular breathings of one who fears nothing, waking or sleeping, the same beam played; it lingered on the open Bible that lay so still upon the table in the window, moved across the speaking page, wandered round the room, and for a moment paused where on the wall the figure of the SAVIOUR blessed the little children,—reposed long on the severed lips and quiet countenance of him who slept upon that pillow, and then found its final resting-place on the large text fixed on the wall, "Thou shalt not be afraid for any terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day; there shall no evil happen unto thee. He shall give His angels charge over thee."

In that room the moonbeam shone on a schoolboy, the aim of whose life had been to bring the souls of those around him to holiness and to God. "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."

CHAPTER XXVII.

SCHOOLBOY INFLUENCE.

It would be impossible, within the brief limits of a history short as this, to narrate the minute points in the daily life of Basil, or our other friends at the school. His influence was felt more and more in every corner of Mr. Dobson's house; it was more direct than that Talbot had used, and more conscious, and in such respects less beneficial, but it had its point of superiority.

The really healthy condition of a school consists in its public feeling being in favour of goodness, rather than in its minute points of developed religion; there is a great danger, when the latter spirit is cherished; boys in a

body cannot bear strong religious expression. It is sure to evaporate into excitement, except in the most rare and well-regulated cases; it takes the form of hotbed development, and is in that proportion unreal and unhealthy. Explicit statement in matters of this kind is not natural to boyhood; they should be allowed to cultivate their own peculiar virtues—obedience, generosity, honour, emulation in a good cause, love towards each other, and purity of mind. Not that strong religious development is impossible with boys. There may be characters in which, as in a lamp, the flame of divine grace burns with peculiar brilliance and steadiness; but they are rare. Those intenser efforts of the soul after God,—those wings, whose energy is able to pass into the higher realms of atmosphere,—generally receive their impetus from long experience; from the conscious weight of some heavy burden of sin; from the anguish endured from the consciousness of a strong, unbroken habit; from a deep conviction of the inability of the streams of this world to satisfy the thirst of the soul. All these are the accidents of age rather than youth. To expect to see these *expressed* in a community of boys,—or what is sure to follow from such expectation, the effort to force these expressions,—is unreal and unnatural; it frequently ends in the destruction and wreck of the religious character altogether. The flame burns rapidly out, the energy is quickly exhausted; the building was raised upon sand, and it gives way.

It was rather too much Basil's tendency to take up this line of things; but there was a strong influence disciplining his character from a hand unseen by him, and the effect of that discipline was, to lead him to a more healthy view of his duties and relationship to the school. His influence was widely felt. He was now head of the school, and maintained that position with credit and honour for some time. Talbot had laid foundation stones on which Basil easily laid a superstructure. Some of the worst boys were gone; Crawshay and Stocker were no drags on the wheel of goodness. Dance still remained; but he was much altered and much improved.

Basil constantly threw himself across his path, and

tried to influence him for good, and he succeeded admirably. The effect of Willie's death had never worn out on Dance's mind; he had always looked up to Basil with peculiar reverence since that solemn hour; and though the influence worked secretly, it worked really upon him. The number of communicants increased monthly, and some of the leading faults of cursing and swearing were nearly eradicated from the school; and all this was attributable chiefly to the influence of one boy. It was felt to be no longer a shame or a discredit to kneel down and pray, morning and evening.

But there were certain points in Basil's conduct which gave him this position and influence which are essential points with those who must deal with the nature of boyhood. He showed strong personal courage on two or three remarkable occasions; he worked very hard, and now that Cox was gone, he was *facile princeps* in scholarship. His conduct was ever generous, high-minded and honourable; and he showed both the power and the will to deny himself personal comforts or pleasures, when a nobler or a truer cause demanded his attention. With Mr. Dobson also his opinion had great weight; the kind old schoolmaster, whenever any case of difficulty arose in the school, was in the habit at once of referring it to Basil, and Basil's cool, unprejudiced, and sound judgment, usually turned out right.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

EIGHTEEN.

Two years had passed away since the minuter incidents that we have been describing, and with them Basil's school-days were reaching their natural termination.

The early morning of the eighteenth year of life, brings to bear rays of light on hitherto unnoticed objects, very different to the glow of the dawn of fourteen, where an uncertain light hovers but over the surface, making

shadows gigantic, and bringing out but partially the objects that attract the eye in an unreal and unnatural lustre; we do not see down to the bottom of the blades of grass, it is equally unlike the pale and quiet light of evening, which shines perhaps more keenly on stems than on leaves, on roots than on upper boughs.

The eighteenth year is that in which we ascertain the reality of our imaginations; phantoms become forms, wild sounds become music, we grasp realities, the boy becomes a man; as an opening eyelid, lash by lash, the powers of the being awake to perfect day; love, imagination, reason, the power to appreciate poetry, conscious interest in the great world outside, self-respect, the assertion of rights, the keen line severing man from man, and creating individuality; these are all lashes of that opening lid, and at eighteen the eye looks steadily and fully on the sun of life.

Such was Basil now, though his morning, as the morning of many, had had its checks and hindrances, some of which the reader knows, and some of which have yet to be told. He had not awoke from the uncertain dawn of boyhood with the same conscious delight that many do. Like every youth, he yearned for point, a focus for the wandering rays of his uncertain life, and that point he had found, though scarcely beyond the beach of childhood.

Though only few summers had ripened the beauty of her young face, and developed the germs of a character full of distinctiveness, Basil had loved Ella with more than brother's love. From the moment that the little orphan had sat by her brother's death-bed pillow, he had conceived a boyish affection for her, which till that moment had lacked definiteness; it had grown with his growing years, and by degrees he found that at the end of every vista of life, his eye rested on Ella's form; she was to be the centre on which his unsatisfied affections were to settle, her smile to cheer his hours of sadness, and her sympathy to be mingled with all his hours of joy; it grew upon him, he was hardly conscious of all its various developements; it was a deep inward growth, and became a part of himself. If he had been asked the question whether he loved Ella, or had any ulterior in-

tentions about her, he would probably have started with surprise. The peculiarity of her situation attracted his somewhat romantic disposition; she was an orphan, and Willie's sister; her circumstances were like his own, her school had become her home, and no very kindly companions guided her youthful footstep on that rough path of life which a mother's hand is so calculated to soften.

It would be simply useless to describe what we have already hinted at before. Ella's personal beauty was of no inferior kind; her very simple dress tended to set off the radiant beauty of her loving eye, fringed with those long lashes which give a peculiar charm wherever they exist; her forehead was often lit by that secondary light, which streaming through her luxuriant pale hair, gave it the beauty which belongs to the feeling of reserve and retirement, while its lines tended usually to express an air, if not of sadness, yet of pensiveness, which the sorrows of early life had stereotyped on her countenance, not that she could not laugh, for she did, and gaily, and then every part of her laughed too. She was thin and tall, but the figure shone with that gracefulness which is after all the greatest beauty in woman; to her it was natural, the lovely figure on that enamelled picture which Willie had so dearly cherished, and which Dance broke to-pieces, told plainly enough that that gracefulness was inherited from her mother.

Such was the form that on the dreaming mind of Basil, and on his wakeful memories, continually arose like the morning star of life, and it was when occupied with thoughts of her, that he now returned for the last time from school, to spend an uncertain vacation at what, since Edward's departure, had become his home, Mrs. Talbot's cottage. It was here he had frequently met with Ella, and Mrs. Talbot's kind heart had taken a deep interest in the orphan child; and as her school was not far removed from Mrs. Talbot's home, she was able, as far as her means would let her, to invite her often there. With Edith for a companion, Mrs. Talbot in the place of a mother, in the sweet and quiet discipline of that holy home, amid the flowers of that garden which to her mind

had no rival upon earth, and in the cottages of those poor which Edith had made peculiarly her own charge, Ella had spent the dearest and brightest hours of her youth. It was there that Basil often met her and had loved her; it was there he had watched the beauties of her simple character, and in the long walks with her and Edith through wood and lane, had allowed her character to wind round his own, till she had become part of himself.

It was late in the evening that Basil, having leapt off the coach at the village public-house, while a boy behind was carrying his carpet bag, approached the home of Mrs. Talbot. He had been made rather anxious from not having recently heard from Mrs. Talbot or Edith, and one hurried line from Mrs. Talbot, saying that she should expect him that evening, was the only communication that he had had. He was surprised at not hearing the dog barking in the garden, who usually greeted every traveller along that lane. When he reached the wicket-gate he paused. The air was cool with rising dew, the church clock was just striking nine, with that silver sweetness yielded by the mellowing air to the great metal bell; the heavy odours of jessamines and honeysuckles from Mrs. Talbot's well-nurtured garden brought in their wake a thousand happy memories of Ella and the past. The house looked dark; there was no light in the lower windows, but there was one upstairs, at that window which Basil knew was Edith's; it was partially open, and through the pale brown blind, the shadows that ever and anon were seen passing to and fro, told that the light in that chamber was not for the purpose of repose. An anxious feeling came over Basil's mind; Edith's great delicacy had always, he knew, formed a source of extreme anxiety to her mother, and each returning vacation too plainly showed Basil that she was a traveller to the grave. She was now just eighteen; that age which is the door of life or death to all. He walked slowly up the gravel walk towards the door, and drew the bell; in a moment the well-known sound of the bark of the little spaniel was heard, and as it ran bounding to the door, told Basil that the house was not deserted.

The door was opened, and Basil was greeted by the

servant maid, who leading him into the small drawing-room, in which he had so often been, placed the candle on the table, and quickly closed the door, saying she would tell her mistress, who would presently come.

Basil felt sure from her manner that something was wrong; he had scarcely time to form his floating suspicion into a thought before the door opened, and Ella entered. He had never seen her look so lovely, and never as yet had met her with feelings so definite with regard to her, as those which now occupied his mind.

"Ella," said Basil, "what is the matter? where is Mrs. Talbot? where is Edith?" said he with a faltering voice.

The tale was soon told.

The room upstairs was still, except those sounds which ever accompany the closing scene. Who can fathom death? what living man?—none. Who can understand the absence of terror, the calm quiet, the love, the self-possession? who can read the deep meaning of last sentences uttered in a tone half to us, and half to self? the song, the clear voice, the sweet tone, where in life it did not exist?

"Good-bye, dear mamma; I am going a little while before you; we shall soon be together again," said Edith, smiling, as she took down with her hand one long, grey tress from her mother's hair,—those which she had so often braided for her each morning of their happy life,—
"soon follow me, dear, dear mamma. How I have ever loved this grey hair, and thought you looked so like a mother when I saw it! and now I read in it the sign of our soon meeting in the land we have talked of together. Oh, do not cry, my mother! I cannot bear to see you grieve. Ella will be a daughter to you as far as the world goes, and I shall be waiting *there*, through JESUS CHRIST."

She looked up, full of life and smiles, on Mrs. Talbot's face, and pointed upwards. It was scarcely possible to weep; it was dying. It was like a young bride tiring for her bridal; there was no sorrow. It is not death for those who sleep in JESUS; it is slumber—slumbering while the Bridegroom tarries: that is all. And Edith

slumbered before morning broke in through the window blind. The virgin lay asleep with the lamp in her hand, trimmed, and ready to be lit at an instant, the moment the cry should come, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE WIFE.

EDITH was buried, and with her Mrs. Talbot's last tie to the world, except him who was far away. Basil had been her great comfort, but the association of that happy home seemed now broken up and gone. Ella was going back the next day; her heart was devoted to Basil; if his lot was poor, how much more was hers. She had nothing to call her own save that loving heart, and that sweet voice of tenderness and cheerful encouragement. Basil's only hope now was India, the refuge for England's demi-poor.

"Ella, it is so hard to go away; to wander, I know not where; to find a home somewhere on the wide world. Oh, Ella, how many years may have to pass before we can live together as we used to think we should."

"But it will come at last, Basil, and we shall love each other none the less for being separated; and then when you come back, we shall have our little home together on that three-cornered common, with the green lane at the corner, and the high trees on both sides, and the great hedges full of may and roses; and the geese walking over the gravel pits, and the red sunset shining on the cows, and sheep browsing the turf by the bank——"

"Oh, Ella, don't talk so, it brings such bright and beautiful pictures to my mind, and makes my going so very, very sad."

But Ella's smile chased his grief away, and her promise to live on the bright picture was a great support to his sadder and more melancholy mind.

His immediate destination was Gravesend and then India, where some hopes had opened through the interest of some of those mysterious friends who still hovered round Basil's destinies.

Mrs. Talbot and Ella accompanied him to the gate: the servants followed; all loved Basil; the little dog followed sadly, seemingly aware of trouble, now looking up in Mrs. Talbot's face, and now in Basil's. The coach waiting at the gate; Basil wrung those hands so dear to him, and was in his seat on the coach. One last lingering look, and he was gone. The last vision he had was of those figures standing at the gate: Mrs. Talbot's grey hair and calm face, and the slender form which leant against her with her face hid upon her shoulder. How often in that long journey did Basil recall those figures to his mind.

His destination was Madras. It is needless to dwell on the particulars of his passage or its events; one thought besides that of home constantly occupied his mind,—the thought of where Talbot was, and whether they should meet: they were both now to be on the same continent and the same land; Talbot in the army, and Basil connected with the civil service, but whether they would ever meet seemed most doubtful.

Basil had not been long in Madras, when one evening, walking out alone on the sands, a couple passed him, one of whom he fancied he recognised: he was a tall slim young man, and leaning on his arm was a woman who seemed by her appearance to be his mother, though from her manner it might have been guessed that she stood in another relationship.

The words which Basil caught as they passed were those of high altercation, in which the woman was asserting her right of dominion in some particular question.

"I insist on it," was the feminine mode of urging the suit: "I insist on it; I have come here to please your ridiculous fancies, and you are bound to make every sacrifice in your power to suit my happiness."

"My beloved, my Adelinda," was the submissive an-

swer, "I will in every possible thing succumb, but in this —"

"Nay, no buts, no exceptions; I will hear of nothing by way of excuse."

"But I haven't the means; I shall be arrested for debt."

"Then you must be; but have the carriage I will. Is it reasonable to expect that I shall sacrifice all in coming to India, and not have the ordinary comforts of life?"

"My own Adelinda, consider—I have but eighty pounds yearly, and how —"

"Whose fault is that?" burst forth the indignant spouse; "did not you delude me with assurances of income and fortune—oh, treacherous! would I were still Adelinda Brunel!"

By this time Basil had ascertained beyond doubt that the unfortunate individual was no other than Wimpkins.

Few feelings are more genuine than those with which one schoolboy meets another in after days, especially if the scene be a distant one; and Basil at once went forward to speak to his old companion. Wimpkins started, and in a hesitating manner accosted Basil, as if half inclined to cut him; there was something ludicrous about his companion's effort at which Basil could scarcely refrain from smiling.

"Ah, Basil, old fellow! why who'd have thought—"

Probably at this moment an electro-telegraphic message, transmitted from Adelinda's finger to Wimpkins's elbow, created a sensation in his mind which altered the mode of his address.

"Oh, my dearest, this is Basil."

A frown of dignity and scowl of temper was the welcome which Adelinda Wimpkins gave to her husband's quondam companion. Poor Wimpkins seemed keenly to feel his difficult plight, and hemmed and hesitated with considerable uneasiness. Whether his wife expected him to beg Basil to be off, or whether she dreaded his inviting him home, does not appear; but she soon broke off alike the conference and the difficulty, by saying,

"I feel too unwell to walk in this heat; my head aches; I shall retire."

"Do, my pet," said Wimpkins, starting off, with ease and facility in his power of speech, at the unexpected release, like a boat suddenly bursting its cordage and anchorage, and gliding off into smooth water.

But evidently Adelinda was not pleased; and though she started alone on her way home, her frequent pauses, her many retrospective glances, her angry look each time that she did turn the thunder-cloud of her face back on her husband, told plainly enough that she had not meant him to remain talking with Basil. But Wimpkins, whether assuming courage by the presence of his friend, or thoroughly scared with the difficulty of his position, it does not appear, remained firmly talking with Basil.

He had news to tell of Talbot. He had seen him twice; once alone, in the street, as Talbot's regiment was passing through the town; and once when, with desperate daring, he had ventured to ask Talbot home to tiffin. On that second occasion poor Wimpkins had been called upon to suffer for his friend. Adelinda was not in her best humour; she was indignant at Talbot's being asked without her consent and suggestion; and she made matters so uncomfortable, that Talbot, seeing how matters were, made an excuse, and left the house. History has drawn a veil over the conversation which then ensued between Adelinda and her husband; but conjecture and rumour drew it up. Enough: Wimpkins did not deem it necessary to reveal these domestic circumstances to Basil. It appeared from his account that Talbot had gone to the north; and here his information with regard to Basil's dearest friend ceased.

At parting, a slight embarrassment of manner seemed to mean, "I would ask you home with me, if I dared." But he did not dare. The mind of Talbot's discomfiture and retreat was too living in his memory, and the friends parted.

Poor Wimpkins! picture of how many a luckless man, whose whole stream of life has been soiled and stained by some foolish fancy of schoolboy days! There is a strange tendency in some youths to fall in love with old women; and the wonder is that neither the youth, the

youth's mother, the old woman's sister, nor the old woman herself, see the misery which must ensue. The thing is treated as a joke; the joke becomes earnest. The silly couple marry, and in after years they are followed by the heartless ridicule or heartless indignation of the friends of both, whose way of treating the matter originally was the cause of all.

The quarrel of husband and wife is no joke; the scream of the victim of the torture,—the long, night-long moan of the field of battle,—are peace to the continual jar of a miserable home. It is all very well to make it half a joke, to laugh at it, to look on it as irremediable; there is no wound which lies so open, festering in the face of the sun, as that wound. It eats inward and onward, like a cancer; it pulls down religion; it shivers to dust the fair fabric of self-respect; it drives, too often, two human beings to habitual vice, to suicidal stimulants, or to earth-long misery. And yet men make it a joke! Old maiden women talk of it as a merry saw; and men rally the wretched victim on his position in such a way, as to compel him to laugh or smile, when the laughter is but like a shout from the coffin of one buried alive, or the convulsive smile on a galvanized corpse.

When will old unmarried women cease to laugh and gossip on what they do not understand? and men cease to make merry on their friend's career, when they console with gentlemanly courtesy on a pain in the little-finger knuckle? When will parents learn that an unequal match, in years, disposition, or circumstances, is a woe entailed on their child far greater than if they had sent that child out a beggar; and is a surer highway for thousands to sin and crime than the most neglected education, or the most unchecked indulgence? Exquisite cruelty, or dense insanity! You form, or you watch, or you connive at the unequal marriage of your child,—the child whose infancy you nursed, whose youth you educated, whose faults you corrected, whose sufferings you sympathised with, whose pangs you alleviated, whose wants you have provided against with a care, nay, an agony, which has furrowed your own cheek and silvered your own hair, shortened your own life and crippled your

own means,—and yet for money, for position, for foolish fondness, or because you will treat it as a joke, you stand at your door as the carriage drives off, bearing that very child, yoked with a companion from whom, perhaps, after the first three months, no beam of comfort will shine. You close your door: it is done. And yet in how many cases thirty long years of silently borne speechless woe has at that instant begun! a woe which will gnaw underground; a worm at the root, screened by the soil of conventional rule and the forms of society; and never be revealed even to the mother's eye, till when, long after the flower has drooped its wan leaves one by one, without seeming reason, on the sod of external life, the root is dug up, and after death the worm is found gorged with the life of the plant.

Schoolboys should be checked in making matches; not laughed at for them. Mr. Wimpkins was right in saying, "Does the blockhead think of marrying Miss Brunel? She's old enough to be his grandmother!" But he was wrong in taking up "The Times," and forgetting Miss Brunel the next moment: he should have hindered the match.

Nothing may be more beautiful than the marriage formed in early days. Under Mrs. Talbot's eye, disciplined in life, Ella and Basil loved; but their love received its proper check: then most lovely may be the effect in after life. If respect for her husband be planted early in the girl, tenderness and unselfish consideration in the youth; if these be looked on, not only as a passion, but a feeling—not only a feeling, but a principle—not only a principle, but a sacramental tie; then how beautiful the lot of marriage! The girl who, like Ella, with her sweet smile and cheering voice, her gentle influence, and power of patient, unambitious bearing, first made us work for her sake at the university, struggle through the difficult initiatory years of professional life, choose our lot with calmness, principle, and prudence; and above all, who made us first feel we had another to live for, and for whom we were to unlearn the lessons of selfishness; the girl with whose voice our own has ascended in prayer to God, and solemn resolution, with His help, to sin no

more ; that girl, when our own, becomes—what ? Stop one moment.

I passed a churchyard among mountains on a summer's evening ; I heard some one weeping, and I went in. I found a man of the middle age of life by a new made grave, and gazing upon it without moving or speaking ; the bat whirled round him, and hastened on, as if in vain trying to make him attend ; the old church clock tolled out its hour of nine, as if striving to rouse the mourner. But in vain. Presently I heard him talking to himself.

" Oh, Sarah, Sarah ! what shall I do without you ? Sarah, my own, my precious wife ! Oh, how dreary life seems now ! When I struggled with poverty, day after day, and came home discouraged and heart-broken at night, your smile, your cheerful voice, your tones of encouragement set all right, and yet I often noticed you were eating crusts to give me better food. I remember how you used to fling yourself on your knees before me, take my hand and set my finger to part your curls, and place my other arm round your neck, and look up laughing with those blue eyes, in whose dear depth I saw my all ; and you would not leave me till I had laughed too ; and then you would spring to your harp, run your fingers over its light strings, and sing those sweet songs which formed the life and glory of my school-boy days ; and all was peace then. Oh, my Sarah ! my wife ! what *shall* I do now ?

" And then, Sarah, when days grew better, and those three dear little ones gathered round our knees, and poverty passed away, and with increasing means, I became extravagant, careless, and at last in debt, and you, day after day, so gently bore with me, so gently, so carefully, so affectionately remonstrated with me, and I was cross and angry. Ah, more than once, dashed you from me, and rushed, abusing you, from the room ; and at night, when I returned, found you asleep in bed, with those long lashes glued with tears on your dear cheek ; and saw how you still denied yourself everything, to save the ruin of my sinful indulgence. Oh, Sarah ! my own Sarah !" His voice choked, and he sobbed aloud.

" But you are gone ! You lie there, cold and silent !

Then ruin came, and you bore it without a murmur; never reproached me, never was angry, when others justly blamed me, you defended me and spoke of '*our faults*' when it was only *mine*. My cause was always your's, oh, Sarah! I can see you like a sweet vision for ever passed away. That look of indignant love you used to cast towards me whenever anyone ventured to find fault, as if you would have made your kind and yearning bosom my shield against any attack.

And then, when I was ill, ill and beaten down through my own fault, you nursed me night and day, forgot in a moment all the wrongs I had done to you, and centred all your soul on me. When I lay in those long feverish sleeps, and woke every now and then, to gaze, with dry lips and disturbed brain, on the shining circles of the rushlight on the wall, and looked at the heavy curtain opposite and the deep shadows of its noiseless folds, I used to hear the gentle rustle of your gown as you scarcely moved to turn over the leaf of the book you were reading by the fire, or walked across the room to prepare some little comfort for my waking moment; I used to see your figure cross the aperture of my curtain, it looked the sign and symbol of comfort and repose, as if there was one who had one sole thought and aim on earth, and that thought was I. And then, the tenderness of that look, that smile, that voice with which you came to wake me when the appointed hour came, and did not know I had already woke. Oh, Sarah, Sarah! dear, dear companion of my faulty life, what shall I do now you are gone away!

"Those long long walks by sunset and by twilight, when in summer it was your delight to rove with me and listen to my voice, my tale of business or my oft complaint; and as we stood together to hear the soundless stillness, looking down the slumbrous boughs of old ancestral trees, which formed evening's corridor to the twilight sky, along which bats and moths might take their solemn flight, you would lean your head against my arm, and I heard your gentle sigh, scarce heaving lest the spell be broken: and as we stood, the distant tower tolled out the chime of passing time,—the distant music of the coming night,

heard like the trumpet of a sable warrior riding through the distance far away in lonely majesty to war upon the day,—I felt your hand just press my arm in deep unuttered joy, as if your heart drunk all too deep of nature's soothing draught; and oh, Sarah! what is twilight now? how sad, how lonely to my aching heart!

"And in the morning when I went to work, you went with me to the wicket-gate which shut our little garden in, gave me the flower you had plucked, kissed me as warmly on my often anxious brow, laughed all my care away, and as I turned round, I used to see you with hand uplifted to your brow, to shade off the glowing beam of the October sun, to see me down the lane, and if I turned, you waved your hand, and went. Oh, Sarah! then I used to say, as I walked beneath the hedge, 'My God! I thank Thee for her; oh, how deeply! what *should* I do without her?'

"And then you died. Oh, that dying hour! No thought of self, but only thought of me! The long last day when we were all alone together: your head upon the pillow, I gazing wildly by your side, your dear hand in mine,—the feeling, I *knew* that it was true, that I should feel its gentle pressure, its warm touch, no more again in life's dull journey; the smile that lit all day your smiling cheek, with which you strove to chase my woe away; that clean gay cap whose pure white ribbon you put on, as if to mock at dying, more like your bridal than your passing hour. And then you said, 'Good-bye!' *looked* at me; oh, Sarah, Sarah! that last dear look, that sweet long gaze which your soul took here, as your lips whispered all your trust in Jesus. And then, oh, Sarah! then what came? Oh, you were gone! No more my comforter in life's most bitter hour! I looked all madly on your fading lip; I saw its colours pale away; I kissed that cheek;—my wife, my all!—but it was freezing cold, and you gave no answer to my call. Still I held that hand; I pressed it, thinking it would press in turn. I could not, would not think that you were gone, and I was all alone.

"And when, the next morning, starting from my sleep, my first old waking word was 'Sarah,' and no answer came. 'Sarah!' the name I ever said, when, in the early

morning, returning daylight brought back its world of care, and Sarah was its one sure remedy. And you answered not. And then came over me the aching maddening thought, that through life's future sufferings I must walk alone. Oh, Sarah, my precious wife! then I knew what I had lost in you!

"And then last Thursday, when alone I walked behind your silent form, a mourner for my dead, and followed up the churchyard path, where we for years had walked together; and thought of that face which was *my own*, under the coffin-lid, felt as if still we walked together silently; and yet how hard to feel it! Mockery! And then they laid you there, and there your body lies close at my feet. Oh, how cold and lone the chamber where we still are near each other! still it is my home. Where *can* I go? where *can* I rest but here, although your pillow is the grave and this chill churchyard our chamber now? Oh, Sarah, what *would* I give to hear you speak once more?"

There was a pause. He sat without moving, his head buried in his hands. I dared not move, scarce breathe. Twilight had gone, and night come up with all her host of stars. The church clock struck the chime of ten. A vision seemed to float before me, to which the mellowed bell gave voice, which I almost fancied lingered over the grave and seemed like her to whom he spoke.

"Oh, William, hush! I still am by you, and shall be till we meet again, to part no more. God took me, William, that you might love *Him* more. Still feel that I am by you in prayer and sorrow, still your own, waiting, my husband, at the door above to see you come. Oh, feel that every fault subdued is but another wave o'erpast which brings your lonely vessel home. William, dear William, do not grieve at one harsh word you ever said to me. I know it better now, and if my love was then too strong to make me think of it one fleeting instant, now I know more our frail and fragile nature, I only love you more than in our dearest hours of life together. I know you loved me, love me now with power undying. Only go home, and through the brief remnant of your journey home, to that blest day when you shall follow.

me, live as we tried to live, beneath His blessed yoke, and then this bitter hour will be one day among His richest boons."

The voice had ceased. He rose to go. I watched him as a minute he stood to gaze upon the grave, and saw his sable figure quietly and slowly move towards the church-yard gate. I heard it close behind him, and for some moments heard his footsteps in the lane; and in a moment, all was still. I cast one last look on Sarah's grave, as it lay out in the cold starlight, and left it under the church tower, its faithful guardian till the Judgment Day.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE BATTLE.

A DISTURBANCE had broken out on our northern frontier in India. The troops were sent to quell it, and amongst others Talbot's regiment. The insurgents were of those wild but well-disciplined tribes, which, with a keen perception of the science of war, had benefited by their constant observation of the English mode of operations, while the possession of firearms of high temper and capacity had made them formidable to even our own well-tried troops. The disturbed population had betaken themselves to the fastnesses of rocks and deep valleys which fringe the northern frontier. The position was well chosen, and our troops must be exposed to some danger in assailing it.

In the morning of the day appointed for the assault, they set out on their expedition of peril. The soldiers were in high spirits; few had seen service, and tired of the long life of inactivity, while the great object of their existence was fleeting before their grasp, they set out on what was to be to many the last journey of life. The officers shared in the enthusiasm. All hoped to win

laurels in the encounter, and to send or carry to England a name with some idea attached to it beyond that which they had brought away.

For many miles of a toilsome journey, no enemy appeared, and beyond a few stragglers who here and there started up in the road before them, they would have thought none intended to attack them.

Evening sunk on the high ridges of the hill country around, and while they were approaching the head of a gorge in the rocks which frowned with terrible grandeur and rudeness on their approach, three men, mounted on horseback, with their white turbans bound round their swarthy brows, dressed in the loose flowing dress of their country, appeared, with long guns in their hands, at the head of the pass; they started as if from the bowels of the earth, and discharged their pieces. The slight cloud of smoke curled away on the thin clear air of evening; the noise of the discharge died away in wild distance among the rocks and hills, and the three figures had dashed off in different directions, and in a few minutes were lost to sight. No sooner had the discharge been made, than it was discovered that a man had fallen to the earth, seriously wounded in front of the English line, and another slightly touched by a ball which grazed his shoulder, showed how correct the aim and daring the courage was of the men against whom they marched.

Talbot was near the front, and hastened to aid the wounded man. He was borne carefully to the rear of the advancing column, that he might have his wounds dressed and tended, while the officer in command deliberated on the best mode of action, under circumstances which appeared more formidable than they had seemed at first. Entering the defile seemed now to be an enterprise fraught with some danger; fringed as it probably was with armed men concealed behind the rocks, and night was rapidly advancing. The first aim was to bivouac the men, and to defend against a sudden assault in the night.

Next morning the English entered the pass; they were prepared. The foremost lines defiled in safety into the chasm, not a shot or a voice were heard; but as the centre of

the column entered the gorge, from every side a tremendous discharge of musketry broke out on the advancing line. At first, universal dismay was the consequence; the horses started and reared at the flash of the guns and the roll of thunder, and many of them bore their riders away wounded into the pass.

Showers of arrows and javelins succeeded this discharge, and at first the English were perplexed to discover at what point to aim their attack. Several men climbed up the rocks, and began with desperate courage to dislodge the enemy. And now the battle began in earnest, and for two hours the scene was one of wild confusion, between the fall of bodies from the rocks wounded or dead, the screams of the strugglers in mortal strife, and the fall of rocks precipitated in the confusion to the bottom of the valley.

At length, before the undaunted courage of the British, the Indians gave way, and the pass seemed likely to be cleared; but the loss had been tremendous. At one point the enemy still made a desperate assault; it was at a narrow passage of rocks, which opened out into the valley beyond. As yet this passage had been gained and defended by the troops, but they had been drawn off on either side to defend the more important portions of the valley. Two figures still remained at the important passage, a man and a youth, whose desperate courage had already excited the surprise and admiration of the troops.

Four times with desperate fury the assailants rushed wildly and madly with their loud war-shout against the defended pass, and four times they receded with one or two struck down motionless, or struggling on the ground beneath the arm of him who defended the pass with such furious and reckless courage. The English soldiers paused to gaze on the apparent desperation and yet coolness of the man, who was like one who bearing a charmed life is careless of preserving it. Each furious charge of the Indians seemed as if it must overwhelm him and the point be lost, but each time they reeled before the bullet or the sword. The balls of the enemy showered around their intended victim in vain, and fell powerless to the earth, and the men only re-

ceded to recover strength and means to renew the attack. The fifth time they charged, and the sword-arm of the Englishman fell powerless by his side; his gun fell from his hand, and with a loud shout of triumph the foremost of the assailants sprang forward, grasped with eager hands the edge of the rocks, and in a minute stood on the same rock with his formidable foe. The sword of the Indian was uplifted over the head of the officer, whose shattered arm and acute pain prevented his at once warding off the blow. Death seemed imminent, when the youth before spoken of starting from his post, which he had defended with so much gallantry, sprang to the side of his comrade; with a furious blow he clove the neck of the Indian, and the body staggering forward a few inches fell dead at his feet.

The next opponent sprang forward, and with the same desperate courage he too was met and killed by the youthful soldier; but the passage once gained, numbers were streaming up the cleft and struggling to make good their stand. What has taken minutes to describe was the act of seconds. One eye had glanced more than once to the spot, and now that there was a pause in the steady firing from below, he darted from his post to the rescue of the noble youth, who had just succeeded in cutting down his second foe, as he stood himself across the figure of the wounded warrior, whose head was now leaning against a rock exhausted with the loss of blood, his dark hair showing a death-like contrast with the pallor of his countenance, and his eye already glaring as it remained fixed on the sailing clouds above, beyond the din and stir of war, betokening approaching death.

Talbot, for it was he, who now rushed to the rescue, reached the height of an overhanging eminence just over the young champion. But a chasm intervened between himself and the object of his aim; his pistol stood him in stead at the moment; he fired at the advancing Indian, and the ball penetrated the skull. But the stream was still pouring up behind, and the sight of their dead comrades only whetted their fury and their determination. The chasm was wide, too wide for a leap except under desperate circumstances; but the crisis was desperate; Talbot gazed

across and below ; he hesitated, the jutting rocks which started and yawned beneath him, seemed to be the doorways and barriers to a dark and fathomless grave. But another glance at the scene of action, the face of the wounded and seemingly dying man, whose eye was fixed with an earnest and, as Talbot thought, imploring look at himself. The heroic figure of the boy, whose single aim seemed to be the saving the warrior who bled beneath him, kindled every spark of fire in Talbot's manly bosom, and offering a prayer to God, he sprang with desperate energy the awful chasm: he did not know how, but he reached the opposite rock, his feet again felt firm soil ; the next instant he was by the side of the boy.

The fresh and desperate spirit of Talbot giving such new impetus to the defence alarmed the assailants, who, unable to see clearly the nature of the danger before them, drew back with the view of striving to effect an entrance through the gorge at another point. But they drew back only to meet death and defeat in the advance of the victorious English. Freed for the time from the necessity of continuing their furious defence, Talbot and his young companion turned to the dying soldier; the boy knelt down by his side and begun to staunch the flowing wound of his bosom, but in vain : it was plain the life-blood ebbed fast away.

Talbot, who was leaning for the moment against the rock, was shocked to see the blood which poured from one or two wounds in the boy's arm and breast. But as he was in the act of imploring him to let him take his place in tending the dying, while he drew back to staunch the blood which flowed from himself, the dying soldier began to speak in a way which startled Talbot.

"Is it not Talbot I see?" said he. "I should not be mistaken in that face and voice. Bear me up—lift up my head against the rock, it will prolong life a few brief minutes. A merciful God has granted this as a miracle from heaven."

Talbot started at the recognition of himself, and he approached the soldier. They laid his head as he directed, and the altered position bringing a different aspect of

the face to Talbot's eye, he at once recognised in that of the dying man a face he knew.

"Mr. Granville!" said Talbot, with astonishment, "Is it possible!"

"It is indeed," said the dying man, "and nothing but a most merciful God, Who has heard the prayer of the most undeserving, has brought you here at this moment. Alley, move my wounded arm—there, lift it up. Forgive me," said he, turning to Talbot with a ghastly smile, "the pain was greater than I could bear, and at this instant the purchase of every minute is worth worlds to me."

"Alley!" said Talbot, in great surprise, as he detected now for the first time in the guise and courage of the soldier, the youth whom he had known at school in such strange and varied circumstances of life.

"It is Alley," said Mr. Granville, "and he may safely hear all I have to communicate. Alley! oh, yes," said the dying man; "and with what fidelity has he not served and followed me! and how can I now reward him?" And as the hot tear lingered on the face of the soldier, he pressed the hand of the boy close to his own bosom. Alley bent over the face as his own tears fell upon the cheek of his friend. "Talbot," said Granville, "a heavy secret, nearly long as life, weighs upon my soul; I must tell it before I die; my burdened spirit would not pass without it, and you are of all others the person to whom I would have told it. Lift my head, Alley, higher, a little higher." He gasped for breath, the large drops of sweat hung on his forehead, and an expression of agony passed over his face.

He turned towards Talbot, and fixing his eye upon him he paused.

"Talbot, will you hear a dreadful tale? Talbot, he who is dying before you beneath the just hand of God, has been mixed up more than you imagine, in scenes in which you have taken part. My name of Granville was but assumed; I am one whose name was once fatally known, and whose crimes God has at length so justly visited. You will find it hard to remember the tale to which I refer. I was heir to a princely

fortune and a noble name and title : when a youth I loved one whose gentle nature answered at once through ignorance of me or of life to my call of passion. Poor Mary was born of parents whose position in life, though not poor, was below that which the pride of my station permitted me to mate with. I wooed her at her father's door, at first unknown to him and to her mother ; she was lovely and full of trusting love, and believed my tale of ardent devotion. Through many a long evening we wandered together by hill and valley in her own beautiful country, and forgot the passing day in the devotion of each other's hearts. . Oh, do not blame her ; she was lovely, fair in face and pure and simple in her mind. At length her father knew I wooed her ; he was somewhat stern, and knew that such as I was scarcely likely to make his gentle girl the partner of my title and my rank. And aught else he started from as from the touch of Satan ; a few brief questions asked, he closed his door against me, and forbid his child to meet me. His sense of honour and of strictness was high and stern ; and though he lacked what men may term religion, none would start more eagerly than he from vice and sin. His stern rebuke struck on poor Mary's heart ; she sunk beneath it, and all her mother's gentler words and more temperate advice were unavailing to soothe her wounded love. For hours she sat and worked at the old window where we used to meet together, without a word ; no argument could make her speak. If ever she took her eye from off her work, it was to gaze down the lane which wound its way beneath her mother's window ; and where I used first to meet her in our stolen walks. Her father was severe at her long silence, and her mother rebuked her for her wilful way. Poor Mary ! she had given herself to me, and felt she was already mine.

" Oh, who can say the power of woman's love ! Enough, my life flows fast ; I had been away for months. One evening her wandering eye, as it moved off her work, and strayed along the lane, fell upon my form ; I lingered in the shade, as I had often done, to win poor Mary's glance. She knew me ; her work fell from her hand, and for a moment, as one mad, she stared upon the figure

which so suddenly had passed before her : another minute, and her figure was gliding over the grass, and she was in my arms. She fled with me ; I married her in secret, and we were heard of no more. Our child was born ; for one brief year we forgot all in each other ; all her father's anger and her mother's sorrow ; we lived alone and for each other ; her child was born, and in that we felt life began for us again. Whenever the spectre form of angry conscience peered in upon poor Mary's heart, I scared it all away, and made her fancy that in shutting out truth we could make it cease to be. 'Be sure your sin will find you out.' Oh, sir, how true have I found those words to be.

"Poor Mary always dreaded my leaving her ; an awful boding ever filled her mind that my affections were frail, that ambition in me soared more highly than my love, and that if some voice from home should call me away to honours forfeited and place now lost, I should forget her and return.

"Poor Mary, poor, poor Mary, oh, how strangely true the boding of your simple mind ! they found out my retreat ; I received one fatal morning a letter from my mother ; poor Mary watched me read it ; as I finished it I saw that she was deadly pale, and I suppose that my embarrassed manner confirmed her dread suspicion ; she fainted in my arms. Oh, sir, when she recovered, to hear how she pleaded with me not to leave her ; I bid her anxious mind be still ; she read my thoughts.

"I left her asleep, meaning to return the week after ; I left a letter for her on the table ; I returned home ; I was promised ample pardon for all the past, if I would but renounce poor Mary and her child. The worse part of my nature rose within me ; I saw before me ambition, money, power, titles, all ; my passion had had its day of brief delight ; and out of sight it seemed but the pang of a moment to leave poor Mary to lie a shattered, broken idol by the wayside of life. I reasoned with myself ; I *could* forget her ; I never stopped to think, I dared not, *could she forget me* ; to that I shut my eye, my mind ; utterly selfish—I was soon able to promise all my father bade me.

"If I could, but I could not, I would have never returned to her, and left her there to die; but life and love I knew will not so soon yield; I knew she would find me out, and that might mar all.

"I steeled my heart against what might come, and I returned. Oh, Talbot, I draw a veil over that meeting, that bitter meeting; her aching love; my cold-hearted cruelty. But I dared not tell her all; I could not; she begged me on her knees; her hands were clinging round mine; she begged me to take her to my home; I hesitated; she started from me, and the next moment brought her child and laid him on my arm. 'It is yours, your own; you cannot, oh, you cannot refuse to take it to your home.' I turned away; I could not meet her piercing look; she saw the influence she had gained, and she pressed me harder. 'Oh, take me, take me to your home, your home; *our* home, if I am yours.'

"Enough, Talbot, I took her in mockery; I took her, and concealed her there; I seldom saw her; she lived alone; sometimes in evening's solitude I took her out, and as my child grew up to three years old he went with us; I see her now, poor Mary, so pale and sad; so inquiring in her earnest look at me; as leaning on my arm, we trod the steps of my magnificent home. I knew, I wished it, that her mind was sinking beneath her solitude and woe.

"Now comes the awful part of my dying tale. Alley, raise my head; my time draws near! oh, God, I thank Thee Thou hast given me this blessed opportunity of restitution to my poor Mary and her child. My father, through the information of a servant, discovered Mary's presence there; he questioned me; with his question was conveyed a threat of disinheritance if I did not make a marriage suitable to my lofty birth. In the dark moment of cowardice and ambition, I swore that Mary was my paramour; I denied that sacred marriage ever blest or bound our union.

"My father bid me drive her from my home; I did. I could not meet her myself. I remained away, and entrusted that wild mission to one whose worthless heart well suited the dark deed; I never saw her more. Yes,

I forget—once more I met my poor lost wife: it was on an evening in the avenue beneath my home. I saw her form, dressed as she was in white; I saw her stretch towards me her beseeching hands, and I flew away. I know not how I reached my home; I found myself on my bed, tended by my servants: they said they found me bleeding and stunned upon the step.

“I commissioned others to watch her and to tend her wants, and I heard, at length, that the influence of religion had calmed her mind, and that she had resorted to a distant part to educate her child; but that at times her mind, too frail to bear the awful shock of life, gave way to long intervals of sufferings. Poor Mary! what became of her, I could never hear; but they told me, in one of those wild fits of raving, she had gone at night away, and was never heard of more. I felt it was too likely to be true, for, in my brutal selfishness, I had bade the cruel monster who had been the executor of my bidding in driving her from my home, to seek her dwelling out for purposes of my own; and they say that, walking with her boy the night before she disappeared, she met a stranger in the evening road; I doubt not it was he; and her frail mind sank beneath terror of that dread face. Oh, sir, the tale is dreadful.

“When she was gone, to please my father I married,—married one of high and noble birth. For two brief years, I led a dreadful life; I feared each day my Mary would return, to declare our marriage, and to claim her home. It was my dream by night, my scaring thought by day. I became moody and silent, terrified at myself, and an object of terror to all. She whom I had so guiltily married, died.

“I rushed from my home, and was heard of no more amid my usual haunts; I heard that my child was at school; I determined to live near him, that I might sometimes see his face and watch his life. Claim as my own, acknowledge my shame and guilt, I would not, could not, dared not.

“I assumed the name of Granville; my own by title is Arundel, my child is Basil: the rest you know. This poor youth, my faithful friend and preserver, has been

bound to me by the gratitude of his loving heart, for the service I did him when falsely accused at school. His gratitude has been my undeserved reward; his faithful love has been more, far more, than I deserved. God bless him, when I am gone! He has been my last friend in life's dreary journey.

"Talbot, I have kept you long, but I have nearly done. Take this packet; it contains the proof of my poor Mary's marriage and other things which will establish Basil's titles and his birth. Poor Basil! seek him out, Talbot: he is a noble boy, but in you he has a nobler friend. Tell him my dreadful tale, and bid him, oh, bid him, Talbot!" and the dying man laid so closely hold of Talbot's arm, and looked so earnestly in his face as he raised his head from the rock, that Talbot started. "Talbot, tell him to shun sin as a serpent; above all, youthful lust: indulgence then *must* bring bitter drops through life, perhaps dregs like gall—dregs cursed as mine. Oh, bid him beware, and fly to God for grace while yet there is time. For me,—oh, I know not,—the hope is small; I know not whither I go: all is dark before me, dreary and wild. My torn and shattered vessel is nearing shore in a storm: all is dark, I see no harbour, but I know the land is close to me. But I have done: carry this to Basil; he is heir to a princely fortune and a noble name, but God in heaven grant, not an heir to his father's sin!"

He ceased. Alley bore his head. Talbot offered to pray; the dying man bowed his head in assent, and Talbot prayed. There came a choking in the throat, and without another word his spirit passed away.

Night sunk upon the dark ravine, and the moon shone on the three figures, the living and the dead. They wrapped up Reginald Lord Arundel in his soldier's cloak, and next day buried him among the rocks, Talbot reading over him the funeral service, and the soldiers of the troop bearing him to his sepulture; but neither Talbot nor Alley revealed the secret that he was more than what he had said. The veil was drawn to the army alike over the titles of Granville and of Arundel.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE SHIPWRECK.

BASIL had been in bed some hours. He was living in a small town on the Indian coast, near Pondicherry. The service in which he was employed had called him there.

The evening before had been wild and stormy, and the waves had run mountains high; all the fishermen and boatmen had prophesied an awful night, and it came. Nothing could be more terrible than the wild roar of the elements. It became at length so dreadful, that Basil rose from his bed to gaze on the scene before his window. The sea was one mass of hoary water far out into the darkness, while the surf rushed madly to and fro, and gigantic waves plunged with fury into the old Indian shore. The night was dark, but there was light enough to see faintly the shore. A few figures of rough seamen were standing about, and apparently anxious about something in which they had some concern.

"It's a dreadful night," said a boy who had crept up to Basil's side, as if afraid to sleep alone.

"Very," said Basil; "I trust that no vessel is expected in near shore on a night like this."

But the expression of his voice indicated the uneasiness of his mind. Scarcely had he spoken, when a considerable stir was manifest among the men on the beach, which showed that some object had awakened their interest. Basil, following the impulse of the moment, went down to the beach with his companion.

"What is it?" said he to a boatman who stood near.

"A ship; don't you see her?" said the man, pointing into the dark air, which lay like a motionless mass before them.

"A ship! and in such a night as this?" said Basil, straining his eye in vain to see the object to which the sailor pointed.

"Ay, and it is; and it's a miracle if a single life is saved in such a storm. The breakers run mountains high, straight in to shore, and the wind is enough to tear her very masts to splinters: no boat could live in such a night as this. Don't you see her?"

By this time Basil had been able to discern, in the dense darkness, an object close to him; it rose in tall, gigantic, shadowy shape, all but under his eye. He had been looking over and beyond it; it now appeared so close, as to make him start back from the spot on which he was standing: it was the ship upon a rock, heaving awfully among the breakers. At the same moment, above the noise of wind and wave, rose, easily distinguishable, the shouts of men, the groaning of the timbers, and the breaking and tearing of mast and sail.

"Oh, awful! Can nothing be done?" shouted Basil, as he rushed forward to the spot towards which now all were running. "Can no boat go out to them?"

"Boat!" said a fisherman, who was standing calmly looking on, with his hands thrust into his trousers; "boat—ha! I don't know where's the boat would live in a night like this."

"But she's full of men, living beings!" said Basil, in agony; "they will all be lost."

"Well, what odds?" said the man, indifferently; "a few less here, and more there; no one goes before his time comes."

He moved off, his eyes still on the yearning ship.

Basil was shocked at the indifference to human nature in such mortal agony. He went as near the breakers as he dared. Here indeed was presented a sight which showed how prostrated all human effort was. Some hundred sailors had gathered round, strong, athletic, daring men, to whom the term danger seemed a toy; but all were baffled. On some faces there was despair, on some anxiety, and on some indifference, but hope on none. Three boats lay on the shore, a few yards up, but no one thought of moving or touching one. The sailors knew where hope ended and despair began.

"Oh, can't anyone do anything?" said Basil, in bitterness, looking to the boats.

At this moment a cry was heard from behind, sorrowful and sad enough to pierce every heart. A woman rushed forward towards the group. By the torches which were now blazing around, Basil could see her face and figure. Her dress was loose, as if just thrown over her, as she had risen wildly from her bed, scared by the tempest: her hair hung unbound around her shoulders. She had a child in her arms.

"Oh," cried she, "he's in her! he's in her! he said he should be home with the troops to-morrow. Oh, for your own children's sake, for His sake in heaven, do, do try and save her!"

The frantic manner of the woman as she flew from one to another, catching hold of each one she came up to, drew from all of them a look of more sympathy than Basil had expected from such rough faces. But her wild appeal gained no answer, save the shrug of the shoulder or a murmur of despair.

All eyes were on the ship, whose situation each moment became more and more perilous and awful. At that moment, on one of the tremendous billows, which was advancing to the shore, a form was seen lying. Another moment, and the wave dashed itself and its burden on the beach, beyond reach of the next mountain which followed in full pursuit. It was the figure of a man. He had been washed from the wreck, and with his arms outstretched above his head, his hair lying wet and torn on the shingle, and his pale face, lying motionless in the light of the torches, which were immediately brought around him, were seen the features and dress of a soldier who seemed to be at once recognised. A low murmur passed among the men as they made an effort to throw a cloak over the face, but they were not quick enough: the woman before-mentioned anticipated them, and rushed to the spot, and tearing the cloak from their hands, gave one long gaze on the deathlike features.

"It's he!" shrieked the voice of the poor creature, with a scream which rose shrill and wild above wind and water. "It's he!" And the next moment she had thrown her arms round the stiffening body, and pressed her face on the cold lip of the soldier. "It's he, it's he! my child's

father! Oh, my God! my God! what shall I do? Charles, Charles! wake up! Don't play at sleep now! It's beyond a joke! Here's Baby, Baby you never saw, come to meet his own father! Touch his face, Baby, touch him, pull his wet hair! He'll wake for you!"

The poor mother placed her struggling child down by the side of the dead man, and waited in one dreadful moment of suspense for him to wake; but he moved not.

"Come away, good woman," said a sailor, kindly, "come away: we'll bring him home."

But words were vain; for she had clasped her fingers round the stark form, and it would have been as easy to have severed the billow from the raging deep, as to have parted the living lip from the cold one on which it pillowed.

"It's the Thirty-fifth!" said the man who had been holding the torch close over the dress of the soldier. "They were returning from Calcutta, at this time; they were expected just now."

"The Thirty-fifth?" cried Basil, starting as one awakened from a dream: "The Thirty-fifth?"

"Yes, sure, see here," said the man, "here's the button."

"The Thirty-fifth," said Basil, half to himself: "why, that's Talbot's regiment."

In a moment the awful fact broke on him: that ship contained Talbot's regiment, and probably Talbot too. Every interest he had hitherto felt in the wreck was now increased a hundredfold.

At this instant a cry was raised among the sailors: "She's on fire!"

And the next moment a broad stream of yellow light arose high and steady into the dark air. Now the scene changed its aspect: instead of gazing into shady nothingness, against which the vessel stood out as a ghost against the sky, she was the one prominent object. The flame which rose in the back part of the vessel served for a lurid back-ground, against which the dark form of mast and hulk stood out in frightful distinctness, showing the figures of men on her deck and on her yards.

The sea was thrown into deep darkness by the glare of fire; except where here and there the flame lit up the surf, it was all one ebon mass of midnight water. The sky behind stood out in deep blackness, making the noise of the tempest more awful still. The flame increased rapidly, and the ship was in tremendous peril from two elements: which would accomplish her destruction? seemed now the only question.

The probability, amounting now to certainty, that Talbot was on board the fated ship, increased Basil's interest in the scene to the most painful degree. But the dreadful part of it all was, that no one could do anything; nothing save standing to receive the bodies which might float to shore.

From the movement of the figures on the ship, it was clear that all there were in the last agony of mortal terror, and that every effort was being made to save the lives of the unfortunate crew, by the life-boats or any means which could be found at hand. The wreck was so near the shore, that the sailors on board were almost seen stretching out their hands beseechingly to those on shore, but help was as impossible as it would have been if the Atlantic rolled between.

Calmly and terribly on deck the captain of the soldiers stood: death was all around; every new wave washed off some struggling mariner into the dreadful abyss below. The last wild cry of dying, the clutch with which they seized on the timber or the crevice between the boards; the effort in vain made to save a comrade or to rescue some trembling struggler from a watery grave, were the only variations of the dreadful scene.

Nothing could exceed the calm courage of Talbot and those round him. With him all was ready: he had long been waiting his summons; his house was set in order. Those round him were gathering near him, entreating him to pray for them. As the wild tempest and the wilder flames poured and flickered on them with the glare of death, the figure of a boy leant against the mast, gazing on the mighty strife. It seemed as if there were a struggle in his mind between an admiration of the war of elements,

and awe of his perilous position. His military cap was off, and his long hair streamed in the wind; his dress was thrown off his shoulders, and he bore evident marks of having worked hard to save the sinking ship; but effort was unavailing now, and he stood with the rest to wait death and gaze on the tremendous scene. It was Alley.

The intense glare and heat of the flame dazzled and scorched the men, as they, in vain, attempted to see the shore. Every instant some new part of the vessel sunk with a crash beneath the devouring element: mast fell after mast; the sails had long since hurried off upon the surge to the dark horizon.

Mighty waves broke over the ship's side, each minute, like giants peeping in to visit the scene of ruin, and to laugh in wild merriment at the dreadful sight. Each jaw of water which opened on the edge engulfed some new victim, who was hurried off without time to do more than utter his death-shriek on the ears of his silent and awe-struck comrades.

"All hope is lost now," said the captain, approaching Talbot and his companions; "the ship's crew are nearly all gone, or have sunk into the flames; we only wait now to die. It is worth the risk, however desperate, to save ourselves by the life-boat."

Talbot turned to his comrades. "On condition," said he, "that no one who can be saved is left behind, I am willing to form one of the life-boat's crew, and to see how we can head the surf and reach land; but I have made up my mind to die, and if it is God's will, I will be the last to shrink from it."

"Die!" said a youth belonging to the few passengers whom the ship was carrying besides the regiment, and was standing near the troops. "Die! must we then die?"

All eyes turned on the speaker; the agitation of his voice, and agony of his expression, excited their attention. He was one who had been taking an active and noble part in the work of striving unselfishly to save the wreck, and the manifestation of fear astonished those who were looking on. But there is a wide difference in the condition of the mind when the body is actively

employed and when it is left to dwell for a few minutes on the deep, unfathomed abstraction of our being. To view a ship as an object to be saved by our exertion for hours of toil, and to view it as our grave, are different things; different as the mind of the surgeon who dissects the corpse, from his who stands and gazes on the memorial and record of his own mortality.

"Die!" said the youth; "oh, I *cannot* die! I am not ready!"

"I fear, my poor fellow," said Talbot, approaching the speaker, "that there is no hope for you; I can only earnestly intreat you to prepare to meet God."

"Meet God!" said the other: "meet God! Why I cursed His Name yesterday, how can I meet Him? I never prayed since I left school; I know nothing of God; and must I, must I die? Oh, Talbot, Talbot, pray for me!"

Startled at hearing his own name thus spoken, Talbot looked more closely at the speaker. He detected now for the first time the face of Brooke.

"What, Brooke," said he, "is that you?"

"Oh, yes," said Talbot's old schoolfellow; "yes, it is Brooke. Oh, Talbot, would I had been like you! would that I had always followed the good at school! Oh, you were right, you were right, and we were all wrong. Oh, do pray for me!"

"I will," said Talbot; and for one still moment Talbot knelt down on the deck of death; he interceded with God for the remaining crew: all by one simultaneous movement knelt down around him. He prayed. Oh, who of that kneeling company ever after forgot the depth of that one prayer, the earnest fulness of that deep Amen, the faces which prayed around by every line of their furrowed agony? Who can say the blessedness of one holy man's prayer, when that prayer goes up from a heart right with God? Who can say the blessedness of having one amongst a company who loves the Lord with all his heart?

That prayer ended, all seemed to have gained courage; calmness sunk on every face, and they proceeded to lower the life-boat. It was hard to lower it; harder still, as it

heaved to and fro on the troubled water, to drop into it; but they all did; Talbot descended last, Alley had gone down just before him. They took one glance at the wreck, now so rapidly consuming, and Talbot seized the cable which fastened the life-boat to the ship.

Alley started up. "The packet! Talbot, Basil's packet, have you it safe?"

Talbot placed his hand suddenly to his bosom, it was not there; in the confusion he had forgotten it; on it hung all Basil's hopes. Talbot paused; he was on the point of springing back on the wreck.

"Stop, stop!" cried Alley; "I will go, you are wanted."

The boy struggled with Talbot to leap back to the deck.

"Mr. Talbot," said the captain, "it is your duty to remain with us, we cannot get on without you; our lives hang on your calmness and authority over the soldiers."

"And on your prayers," said Brooke. "God loves you, and will take care of the boat while you are in it. Oh, Talbot, do not, do not go."

Talbot hesitated; it might be his duty to think more of that boat's crew than of the friend he had so deeply loved and lived for.

In that moment of hesitation Alley sprung back to the deck.

"You can come back and fetch me, Talbot," cried he; "I will swim or bind myself to a spar till you come."

But his last words were drowned in the tremendous noise around. That instant the wreck gave a swerve, the cable which fastened the boat cracked, and the life-boat darted off impetuously on the deep.

Talbot looked back. Alley's figure had disappeared; another minute he was there again: his form stood out against the blaze, and his hand was uplifted as if to show he had got the missing packet; but the next instant a vast billow shut out the wreck from sight, and the flame painted in awful brilliance on the shining breastplate of the opposite wave, and bringing out each little seam of foam on its surface to the eye of the terrified occupants

of the life-boat, was the only sign of the shipwreck that for a moment they had. Once more they mounted to the top; they saw the wreck, and there stood Alley, flames all around, the yearning vessel underneath. Another instant, and all was gone; with one tremendous swerve the vessel heaved and sunk like lead in the mighty waters; flames, fire, all with a deafening hiss disappeared, quenched in the victorious element below. And the eyes of the occupants of the life-boat gazed on the waste of dark, dull, midnight waters, grey and colourless, stretching far, far away into the distance of storms and tempests, a waste of rolling waters without a form, save where here and there, dead upon a billow, with hair out-streaming, and hands heaving up and down, some drowned mariner floated towards the shore.

It was morning, early morning; the storm was still high, but daylight gave comfort. The shore was crowded: mourners, friends, relatives, gazers for curiosity, seamen, and fishermen,—all were gathered in a vast mass upon the beach, to see the bodies float in, or to plunder the portions of the wreck.

Far down the shore, Talbot, who had never gone to rest after his night of noble labour, was standing by Basil. Twice had Talbot alone in the life-boat essayed to go back in search of Alley, but in vain; it was hopeless. The wreck was gone, and the billows threatened certain death; though the men had to use main force to keep Talbot from his purpose. He was waiting now to watch the result of the freight which the waters carried.

"There he is!" cried Talbot. He started from Basil's side. On a wave, bound to a broken spar, with neck, and face, and back in the water, and one hand laid upon his breast, as if to secure something which he had placed there, was the form of Alley. He was quite dead. He had evidently begun to swim, and finding it hopeless, had bound himself to the spar, in the impulse of self-preservation.

Talbot drew away his hand from his breast. Under his coat, secure from harm, lay the little box: he drew it

out. It contained all that which was necessary to establish the power of Basil over his titles, his property, and his estate.

But with what bitter anguish, with what heartfelt and bleeding gratitude did the youths kneel over the body of their old schoolfellow! with what a pang did Basil learn his exalted station from the dead hand of his generous, grateful, noble-minded friend!

Alley was buried next day in a quiet churchyard near the sea; Talbot and Basil followed him to the grave.

"Even in death," said Talbot, as he turned away from the churchyard with his arm in Basil's, "even in death, poor Alley, your body lies within sound of the awful waters which you so loved in life. Thank God, from what I have known of you in the past few brief days, your soul is safe with Him Who dwells there, where there is 'no more sea.'"

CHAPTER XXXII.

ARUNDEL CHURCH BELLS.

THE FIRST CHIME,

THAT sounded very, very long ago; over the distant fields, and lanes, and cottage roofs, which lay quiet and snug under the grey tower of Arundel Church; the sea heaved far away over the downs, and the forms of tiny golden vessels floated in the distance,—so far away, that village children thought they were in the clouds.

It was a glorious day in June, years and years, ay, centuries ago, and old Arundel bells sounded solemn and slow; they sounded over the village, such as it was; they swung past the stately old castle, which rose grey and gaunt among the trees; and even then there sounded a kind of rivalry in the church bells with the castle bell. And to-day, as they swung along the castle walls, they seemed to do it in a mournful triumph, as if they told

of some victory they had won, or some defeat the grey castle had sustained, which it had not heard of yet; and they sounded down to the old sea-beach, and echoed metallicallly along the caverns where the sea slept at night: and as they sounded along, now loud, now low, a stately vessel neared the shore, and a long line of Arundel men walked down to the beach in solemn and stately tread; and a huge old banner hung over head, with the red cross gleaming on one side, and the two bears of Arundel rampant on the other. And on the ship hung a black banner, and a mournful trumpet wailed along the waters from that high ship deck; and they bore a corpse embalmed from the deep ship's hold, and they carried him on a bier, his back to earth, and his face to the sky; his long hair streamed around him; his hands were on his breast; his good sword lay between them, with a cross which formed its hilt. His blue eye was closed, and the lashes lay upon the cheek, as those of one who is sleeping long, and will sleep longer still. It was Basil, fourth lord of Arundel, who had fought in the Holy Land, and the infidel had slain him; and his proved retainers brought him home across the wandering sea, to lay his remains by his lady's side by Arundel chancel wall. They bore him up the narrow path which wound along the cliff, and the sun shone hot above, and the church bell sounded sadly all the while they came along. They reached the castle hall, and in the hall, where spears and banners hung, they laid Basil, lord of Arundel, for all the retainers to come and see his corpse; with his hands upturned to heaven, and his long sword laid between.

Then they bore him to the sepulchre under the old church chimes, which went on ringing mournfully, as if it bid the castle remember that they were conquered at last; they all must come there; in weal or woe, in rest or unrest, the church has them all—feudal lord and suffering serf. Though fifty years the castle may triumph, the church succeeds at last. From dust they came, to dust return. So said the chime that day in answer to the castle bell and the warriors' trumpets on the shore.

That was the proud Lord Arundel whose portrait hung first in Basil's ancient hall.

THE SECOND CHIME.

The church bells rung again on a cold Christmas-eve. Their old sound swung out to cave and cliff, out to the boiling billow, and the boats which hung near shore. But why? there was no gallant ship at hand, or procession winding up the rock; there was no answering knell from the castle clock: still, on went the old church bell, tolling to the graves.

"Amyot's dead, mother," said a young fisher's boy, as he stood by his mother's cottage door; "do you hear the passing bell?"

"Is it for Amyot?" said the woman, not taking her eyes off the spindle, and scarcely moving a muscle of her face.

"Ah, mother; they say he's been dying hard all night. It's been a hard death. Who'll strake him, mother?"

"God knows," said the woman; "they are banned and barred who do. But there'll be some, boy, who will; some, ay, and plenty, who have no bairns to see to, like I have, and who care for nought but good brotherhood. God bless them! He'll give 'em home hereafter, if not here."

"Hark, mother! the bell's done; the church bell's done: he's passed."

And the boy looked out to the deep roaring sea down in the evening light, as if half expecting to see the released soul fleeting over the distant deep to its new home.

"Thank God, another gone to rest," said the woman; "an unked death to die, outcast with the sea-bird for a companion, and the old sea to sing lullaby, but never mind, boy, the dear church bell did its work, and bid all good men pray to have the dying man forgiven, and no castle lord could hush that, and it'll sound again for his burial, and then all is rest."

Amyot was a serf of Amelot, sixth lord of Arundel; he was an iron lord, stern of heart, and stern of face; Amyot had been unable to heave a rock to the castle wall which the stern lord bade him; he had tried hard,

but his strength was small, and the lord bid him be turned out of his small hovel under the castle wall, and Amyot said he appealed to the kind God above against the unjust decree, and as he walked forth he lifted up his hands to heaven, and the stern lord heard of it, and swore by a dreadful oath that Amyot should die under no roof save the good God's roof above, and that whoever gave him house or home, food or tending, should share the same fate. Amyot was sick and weakly when he went forth, and he sojourned night and day in the rude caves; death crept on apace, and three men of the village said Amyot should not die alone, come what will, and they went down to tend him through his last agony.

It was for him the old church tolled; and the dark Lord Arundel sat above in the castle chamber, and heard the church bell toll as if it spoke love and kindness to the man he had turned out, and he gnashed his teeth with rage; but the church beat the castle, and called the outcast home; and from the church door went the Priest, as if the church had sent him out to give the sick man food for his last day's journey, and he blessed him and interceded for him before he died, and the outcast died in peace through JESUS CHRIST, Who died for him.

And the church bell sounded again when they buried him; and all the dark lord's retainers stood at the castle gate and scoffed at the Priest, and the good company that bore Amyot to his grave; but not in the least cared they, and the church bell never ceased its kind words of love till they had laid him quietly beneath the turf, and then the bell had done; and the old tower looked kindly down upon the grave and out upon the distant sea. And so the church of Arundel conquered the feudal tower.

Amelot, the dark Lord Arundel, frowns also from Basil's old ancestral hall, on merry guests, who feast in summer, when the board groans with venison from the antlered herd, and purple wine all cooled in living snow, and fruit which gush with juice. But the grim lord's frowning little disturbs their merriment. And in long winter evenings he frowns on little children, who sport and shout, in merry play, along the stone-paved hall, while the blazing fire upon the hearth casts their shadows

on the wall, and the wind which blows the spear and shield makes them start and look up with terror at the grim Lord of Arundel, who frowns upon the wall.

THE THIRD CHIME.

"Hist, Annie, mind your work, girl, or you'll never see the great lady on All Hallow E'en."

"All Hallow E'en, mother, and that's three weeks come Saturday; does the great lady come out then?"

"Ay, sure, and she'll come through the village, and stop at each house and speak to us all; that's many a long day since I've seen the great lady, and many a day since any one saw her here, save Damian the steward, and old Fraser the seneschal, and the big people at the castle."

"Is she very grand, mother, to see?"

"Ay, and she is so grand, Annie, it'll make you tremble, and yet she's very sorrowful, and something kind a little too. Men say there have been wild things happen there, when the great lord died; but it's best not speaking of what you can't prove. God forbid I should slander any one, specially such as she; if she's done wrong she has her own punishment; heavy's the burden of a guilty heart."

"What, mother, has the great lady done bad?"

"Hist, child, hist, can't ye? ye'll bring down trouble upon us all at that gate. Who's that as said she had done wrong?"

All Hallow E'en came; it was a bright red day on sea and land, the last melancholy glow of summer's sun: its red farewell before it goes to its winter's home: no breath of air stirred leaf or wave.

The children were all expectation, and the women cleanly dressed worked their spindles at the door, and the fishermen had left their nets and their boats upon the shore; a thick fog rose from the sea at noon, and at two by the castle clock the Lady of Arundel left the castle in her stately old carriage to pass through the village to visit her retainers; it was an old custom, and once a year only

the Lady of Arundel was seen by the people, and this was the occasion.

Strange rumours were afloat of acts of the lady done in bygone days : but true or not, she was wondrous sad and melancholy, and the children started as she came to the house and spoke kindly yet so sadly as she laid her hand on their heads. It was a long looked for visit, this, from the great Lady of Arundel. She had passed through the village and returned to her home, and for weeks to come the children talked about the great lady, but when they talked they whispered and looked round, and the mothers shook their heads and went on working.

It was on the last day of the year ; the castle bell tolled solemnly, and the church bell took it up, and the two swung together across the sea, as hurrying to tell some one on the other side the water who ought to be here, that Alice Lady Arundel was dying. The children stopped their play and pointed to the castle and said, "The great lady is dying up there;" and the mothers looked at each other, and gossip tales went round.

Far along the castle corridor was the room where the lady was dying ; a large old shadowy room, with one window looking down on yew-trees, which sprung up near the churchyard wall. Two attendants were in the room, no more. The cross was raised before her, and her head was propped on the pillow ; she gazed round the ample room, but she spoke not, but by her knit brow and her heavy breath something lay heavy on her soul, and the castle was so silent, so large and empty. At last her spirit passed, and the church bell tolled for her funeral, and the children sighed as if a load were gone from their soul, and they played again and sung as if a heavy dream had passed away, for the church bell seemed to say, "Alice Lady Arundel has gone away."

And the portrait of Alice Lady Arundel, hung in Basil's noble hall.

* * * * *

A FOURTH CHIME.

It was not long ago, and Arundel church chimes rung a merry peal, and a bridal party passed along under its vaulted roof. The bride was beautiful but sad, like marble; and sadder still the bridegroom who rode by her side; as the people said, "More like a burial than a bridal."

They say as the lady stepped into her carriage, and the bells set up again, one bell rung wrong, and thrice it rung out of tune, and at the moment one in white came up to the carriage window and stared in, and held up a beseeching hand; but the dark bridegroom turned deadly pale and drew up the window, and the horses plunged away. But as they went, the lady in white put up her hand with strange signs, and was lost amid the crowd.

I know not, but two years after the church bell tolled again, for the bride was going to burial, all dressed in white, as she was before, only I saw a shroud and not a bridal gear. And she slept among the dead; and as the coffin touched the lych-gate the bell rung right, as they say it never had done since that bridal morn.

It seemed to say in its chime next day, "God sets all wrong things right."

There was no picture of that Lady of Arundel hung in Basil's hall.

A FIFTH CHIME.

It was on a winter's night: two sat by a fire; the embers burnt low, and the fire-light was on the wall; they had talked of long gone days, and their hands were on their knees. A knock came at the door; they started, for it was midnight, and the clock had just struck twelve.

The man opened the door, and looked out into the cold dark, and at first saw nought, when presently out of the shadow came a form; she was all in white, and her long black hair hung in streams down her back, her dress was wet, as if she had just stepped from the running stream; her eyes were very large and dull, and her cheek was

very pale. She beckoned with her finger as she entered by the door, and she went without speaking to the fire and sat before the embers, and she placed her hands on her knees and gazed into the light like a being in a dream.

Neither dared to speak or move, but they looked upon each other. At last she rose, and as she slowly rose she simply said, "And am I not Lady Arundel?" and then she stood and gazed upon the fire-lit wall.

She turned towards the door and went out as she came in. They fastened it behind her, and lay close together that night; and in the morning on the snow, all stark and dead, that lady lay. None knew who she was nor whence; she was buried with the poor, and Arundel church bells rung kindly but sadly over her grave, as if they knew, more than all the people, who the lady was.

It was strange; they say a picture hung among the rest in Basil's castle hall of a lady dressed in white, with long, dark, streaming hair and melancholy eye, and under it was written the name, "Mary Lady Arundel."

THE LAST CHIME.

And again. It was a bright June morning: on violet sea and bright green field, on jewelled flowers and tall shadowy trees, the sun was walking forth to set his grand dominions all in order, marshalling the myriad waves and calling every leaf his own, passing by the caverns on the old sea-shore, and peering into them refused to enter, for they owned not his sway.

The bells struck up again. All Arundel was full of life: old women leaned on staffs, with flowers in their bosoms, and clean caps on their wrinkled heads; and little children gaily dressed, looked up into their grandam's face, and wondered at the noise the merry church-bells made; and the broad pennon streamed from Arundel castle tower, for church tower and castle had done their rivalry to-day; and working men came out with bright morning faces, as if work had flown across the sea; and women with their infants were trooping toward the churchyard-gate with eyes intent and eager

feet, to see a show pass by. Never had Arundel looked so gay or Arundel church bells played so long a tune. Church bells are strange time-servers, for they can say what you would have them, and ring the change to your own sentence; and to-day every chime would ring with, "Basil and Ella are wedded to-day."

"My dearest mother, did Ella ever look so lovely as she does to-day?" said Basil, as he seized Mrs. Talbot's hand (for now he used to call her mother) while standing by the window of that cheerful little drawing-room, in the house which Mrs. Talbot had made her home, close to Basil's park at Arundel, and Ella was sitting at the table at the end of the room writing, and Talbot standing by her side was tying flowers, while he talked to Willie's sister of days gone by.

"She does, Basil, look lovely; and well she bears her sudden change of station. God loves to exalt the humble, and to give us the very blessing we shrink from asking or seeking. She does look lovely, and a good wife, dear Basil, I think and believe she will make you."

"Oh, it seems as if life were too bright, too happy," said Basil, gazing from the window at his own beautiful domain, which slept beneath the moonlight.

"Get rid of that feeling," said Mrs. Talbot; "or rather let it be very, very real. We must not let any thing be too bright here, God *will not have it*. And there is the reason of half life's sorrows for the good; they will think they may make this world half a home, if not wholly, and shut their eyes while they let their hand fasten the cable to the rock which is to anchor them here, as if the moral guilt were gone if we do the act with averted eye."

"Dear Mrs. Talbot, God teach me that lesson, and keep me every day very, very humble."

"If, Basil, you can make that your sincere prayer each day, all will be well. We must be on the pavement if we would take a bold flight heavenward; there is no bold flight for him who starts half-way: the bird which flies highest is the lark, which nestles lowest in the grass."

And the words of that evening were the text of Basil's after life.

Next morning the bells broke out as I have described above, and an hour before noon, through teeming crowds of villagers and fishermen, past withered hands outstretched to bless, and aged heads bending low, up to the old grey church amid the graves of ages bygone, with the sea heaving far away, Basil led Ella to the church of Arundel.

Mrs. Talbot leaned on Edward Talbot's arm, and several of Basil's friends of schoolboy-days and the neighbourhood were there. Old Mr. Dobson had slept the night before at Arundel castle, and Pulteney performed the service. Talbot brought one friend,—it was Brooke, who had scarcely left him since the night of the shipwreck, a changed and altered character.

The service was calm and deep, and holy Communion closed it. Arundel never saw a brighter day: all were full of praise of Basil's noble bearing, and Ella's sweet and humble form, as she leaned half trembling upon her husband's arm.

On that bright day those were not forgotten who had filled up the group of life in life's young morning; God rest them now! Poor Mary, Basil's mother, at peace now: Willie, dear Willie! long gone to rest alone: and Alley, noble, glorious Alley, with the figure looming out between sky and wave: and Edith, how dear to all who were gathered there!

Often in after days, Talbot, when at home from the calls of his regiment, stayed with his mother in Arundel, and they would all sit together and talk of dear old days, and humbly wait and pray for the blessed time, when in another world the scattered sheaves would be bound up again into one shock, the severed bond united, and the household of earth become once more a household in heaven.

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